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THE
PORTRAIT OF ST. PAUL:
OR, THE
TRUE MODEL
FOR
CHRISTIANS AND PASTORS.

TRANSLATED
FROM A FRENCH MANUSCRIPT OF THE LATE REV.
JOHN WILLIAM DE LA FLECHERE,
VICAR OF MADELEY. *h*
TO WHICH IS ADDED,
SOME ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR.
BY THE REV. JOSHUA GILPIN,
VICAR OF ROCKWARDINE, IN THE COUNTY OF SALOP.
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.—1 Cor. xi. 1.

SHREWSBURY:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. AND W. EDDOWES:
SOLD ALSO BY T. LONGMAN, PATERNOSTER-BOW,
LONDON: 1790.

THE
PORTRAIT OF ST. PAUL

THE
THE MODEL

CHRISTIAN AND PASTORS

TRANSLATED

FROM THE ORIGINAL OF THE LATE

JOHN WILLIAM DE LA PIERRE

NICKER OF WADDELL

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE AUTHOR

JOHN GIBLIN

VICAR OF THE CHURCH OF THE COUNTY OF SALON

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

By the Author of the 'Lives of the Saints' &c.

SHRIMSWORTH

Printed and sold by J. and W. Edwards

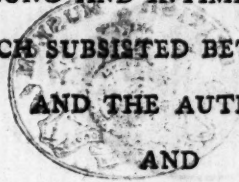
at the 'Three Crowns' in St. Paul's Church-yard

London: 1793



TO
JAMES IRELAND, Esquire,
OF BRISLINGTON, NEAR BRISTOL,

THE
FOLLOWING WORK IS
RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED,
AS A MONUMENT
OF THE LONG AND INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP,
WHICH SUBSISTED BETWEEN HIM
AND THE AUTHOR:



AND
S A PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF THE VERY LIBERAL
ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT,
WITH WHICH HE HAS FAVORED

HIS TRULY OBLIGED

AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE TRANSLATOR.

JAMES FREEMAN, ESQ.
OF BRISTOLTON, NEAR BRISTOL.

THE
FOLLOWING IS
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following work was undertaken and nearly completed during M. de la FLECHERE'S last residence in Switzerland, where it was originally intended for publication.



THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

MANY celebrated writers have offered excellent treatises to the public, some on the character of a true christian, and others on the duties of a good pastor. It were to be wished, that these two objects might be so closely united, as to fall under the same point of view: and to effect such an union is the design of this work, in which may be seen, at one view, what were the primitive christians and the apostolic pastors; and what they are required to be, who are called to follow them in the progress of piety.

As *example* is more powerful than *precept*, it was necessary that some person should be singled out, who was both an excellent christian and an eminent minister of Jesus Christ. The person we fix upon is St. Paul, in whom these two characters were remarkably united, and a sketch
of

of whose wondrous Portrait we endeavour to exhibit in the following pages.

When this Apostle is considered as a christian, his diligence in filling up the duties of his vocation, his patience in times of trial, his courage in the midst of dangers, his perseverance in well-doing, his faith, his humility, his charity, all sweetly blended together, constitute him an admirable model for every christian. And when we regard him as a dispenser of the mysteries of God, his inviolable attachment to truth, and his unconquerable zeal, equally distant from fanaticism and indifference, deserve the imitation of every minister of the Gospel.

The Holy Scriptures furnish materials in abundance for the present work, *The Acts of the Apostles* from chapter viii. containing little else than a narration of the labors of St. Paul, or an abridgment of his sermons and apologies. The new Testament, besides the Acts, contains twenty two different books, fourteen of which were composed by this Apostle himself, with all the frankness suited to the epistolary style, and all the personal detail, into which he was obliged to enter, when writing in an uncommon variety of circumstances, to his friends, his brethren
and

and his spiritual children. It is on such occasions, that a man is most likely to discover, what he really is: and it is on such occasions, that the moral painter may take an author in the most interesting positions, in order to delineate, with accuracy, his sentiments, his circumstances, and his conduct.

Let it not be said, that, in proposing this Apostle as a model to christians, we do but cast discouragements in the way of those, who are at an immense distance behind him, with respect both to grace and diligence. The masterly skill, that Raphael and Rubens have discovered in their pieces, serves not to discourage modern painters, who rather labor to form themselves by such grand models. Poets and orators are not disheartened by those *chef-d'oeuvres* of poetry and eloquence, which Homer and Virgil, Demosthenes and Cicero, have transmitted to posterity: why then should we be discouraged by considering the eminent virtues and unwearied labors of this great Apostle? The greater the excellence of the pattern proposed, the less likely is the labored copy to be incomplete.

It

It is granted, that all the faithful are not called to be ministers, and that all ministers are not appointed, like St. Paul, to establish new churches: but it is maintained, that all christians, in their different states, are to be filled with the piety of that Apostle. If the most inconsiderable trader among us is not allowed to say, "I deal only in trifling articles, and therefore should be indulged with a false balance"—if such a trader is required to be as just in his shop, as a judge on his tribunal; and if the lowest volunteer in an army is called to shew as much valor in his humble post, as a general officer in his more exalted station; the same kind of reasoning may be applied to the christian church: so that her youngest communicant is not permitted to say, "my youth, or the weakness of my sex, excuses me from exercising the charity, the humility, the diligence, and the zeal, which the Scriptures prescribe."

It should be laid down as an incontrovertible truth, that the same zeal which was manifested by St. Paul for the glory of God, and the same charity, that he displayed, *as an Apostle*, in the very extensive scene of his labors, a minister is called to exercise, *as a pastor*, in his parish, and a private person,

person, *as father of a family*, in his own house. Nay, even every woman, in proportion to her capacity, and as the other duties of her station permit, should feel the same ardor to promote the salvation of her children and domestics, as St. Paul once discovered to promote that of the ancient jews and gentiles. Observe, in the harvest-field, how it fares with the laborers, when they are threatened with an impetuous shower. All do not bind and bear the weighty sheaves. Every one is occupied according to their rank, their strength, their age, and their sex; and all are in action, even to the little gleaners. The true church resembles this field. The faithful of every rank, age, and sex, have but one heart and one mind. According to their state, and the degree of their faith, all are animated to labor in the cause of God, and all are endeavouring to save either communities, families, or individuals, from the wrath to come; as the reapers and gleaners endeavour to secure the rich sheaves, and even the single ears of grain, from the gathering storm.

If, in the course of this work, some truths are proposed, which may appear new to the christian reader, let him candidly appeal, for the validity of
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of them, to the Holy Scriptures, and to the testimony of reason, supported by the most respectable authorities, such as the confessions of faith adopted by the purest churches, together with the works of the most celebrated pastors and professors, who have explained such confessions.

Among other excellent ends proposed in publishing the following sheets, it is hoped, that they may bring back bigoted divines to evangelical moderation, and either reconcile, or bring near to one another, the orthodox professor, the imperfect christian, and the sincere deist.

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to have either communities, families, or individuals, from the wrath to come; as the respect and glorious endeavour to secure the rich blessings, and even the single ease of gain, from the grasping form.

If in the course of this work, some truths are proposed, which may appear new to the christian reader, let him candidly appeal for the validity

THE FIRST TRAIT

IN THE MORAL CHARACTER OF

ST. PAUL.

HIS EARLY PIETY.

THE great apostle of the gentiles bore no resemblance to those, who reject the service of God, till they are rendered incapable of gratifying their unruly passions. He was mindful of his Creator from his early youth, and as an observer of religious rites outstripped the most exact, and rigid professors of his time: so that the regularity of his conduct, the fervor of his devotion, and the vivacity of his zeal, attracted the attention of his superiors in every place. Observe the manner in which he himself speaks on this subject, before the tribunal of Festus: *My manner of life, from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the jews, which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify) that after the straitest sect of*
B our

our religion I lived a pharisee (a). Having occasion afterwards to mention the same circumstances, in his epistle to the Galatians, he writes thus : *Ye have heard of my conversation in time past, how I profited in the jews religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers* (b). And to what an extraordinary pitch of excellence he had carried his morality, may be inferred from the following short but solemn declaration, which was made in the presence of persons, who were very well competent to have convicted him of falsehood, had there been found the least blemish in his outward conduct : *Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God, unto this day* (c). Such was the early piety of St. Paul ; and such was the righteousness, in which he trusted, when through zeal for the church and state, of which he was a member, he persecuted christians as disturbers of the public peace.

As we have seen the beautiful side of this apostle's early character, let us now consider his defects. As a member of the jewish church, he was inspired with zeal, but that zeal was rigid and severe : as a member of society his manners were probably courteous, but on some occasions his behaviour was tyrannical and inhuman : in a word, he possessed the whole of religion, except those essential parts of it, *humility and charity*.

(a) Acts xxvi. 4, 5. (b) Gal. i. 13, 14. (c) Acts xxiii. i.

charity. Supercilious and impatient, he would bear no contradiction. Presuming upon his own sufficiency, he gave himself no time to compare his errors with truth: and hence, covering his cruelty with the specious name of zeal, he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord (d). He himself, speaking of this part of his character, makes the following humiliating confession. *I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious (e). I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities (f).*

Nevertheless, this rigid pharisee, who carried his devotion to bigotry, and his zeal to fury, had an upright heart in the sight of God. *I obtained mercy*, says he after his conversion, *because I did it ignorantly in unbelief (g)*; imagining, that when I persecuted the disciples of Jesus, I was opposing a torrent of the most dangerous errors.

Piety is that knowledge of God and the various relations he stands in to man, which leads

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(d) Acts ix, i. (e) 1 Tim. i. 13. (f) Acts xxvi. 9—11.

(g) 1 Tim. i. 13.

us to adore, to love, and obey him, in public and in private. This great virtue is the first trait in the moral character of St. Paul; and it is absolutely necessary to the christian character in general, since it is that parent of all virtues, to which God has given the promise of the present life, and of that, which is to come. But it is more particularly necessary to those, who consecrate themselves to the holy ministry; since being obliged, by their office, to exhibit before their flock an example of piety, if they themselves are destitute of godliness, they must necessarily act without any conformity to the sacred character, they have dared to assume.

If Quintilian the heathen has laid it down as a general principle, that it is impossible to become a good orator, without being a good man; surely no one will deny, that piety should be considered as the first qualification essential to a christian speaker. Mons. Roques, in his *Evangelical Pastor*, observes, that "The minister by his situation, is a man retired from the world, devoted to God, and called to evangelical holiness. He is," continues he, "according to St. Paul, a man of God, i. e. a person entirely consecrated to God; a man of superior excellence; a man, in some sense, divine; and to answer, in any degree, the import of this appellation, it is necessary, that his piety should be illustrious, solid, and universal." Without doubt

doubt this pious author had collected these beautiful ideas from the writings of St. Paul, who thus addresses Titus upon the same subject: *A minister must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre: but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince, the gainsayers (h). He must use sound speech, that cannot be condemned: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity; that he, who is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of him (i).*

A pastor without piety disgraces the holy profession, which he has made choice of, most probably from the same temporal motives, which influence others to embrace the study of the law, or the profession of arms. If those, who were called to serve tables, were to be *men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom (k)*, it is evident, that the same dispositions and graces should be possessed, in a more eminent degree, by those, who are called to minister in holy things. *When thou art converted, said Christ to Peter, strengthen thy brethren (l).*

No fight can be more absurd, than that of an impenitent infidel engaged in calling sinners to repentance

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(h) Tit. i. 7—9. (i) Tit. ii. 7, 8. (k) Acts vi. 3.

(l) Luke xxii. 32.

repentance and faith. Even the men of the world look down with contempt upon a minister of this description, whose conduct perpetually contradicts his discourses, and who, while he is pressing upon others the necessity of holiness, indulges himself in the pleasures of habitual sin. Such a preacher, far from being instrumental in effecting true conversions among his people, will generally lead his hearers into the same hypocrisy, which distinguishes his own character : since that, which was said in ancient times, holds equally true in the present day, *Like people, like priest* (m). Lukewarm pastors make careless christians ; and the worldly preacher leads his worldly hearers as necessarily into carnal security, as a blind guide conducts the blind into the ditch. And to this unhappy source may be traced the degenerate manners of the present age, the reproach under which our holy religion labors, and the encreasing triumphs of infidelity.

The natural man, saith St. Paul, receiveth not the things of the spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (n). Now, if a minister, who is destitute of scriptural piety, is counted unable to comprehend the doctrines of the Gospel, how much less is he able to publish and explain them ? And if those, who live according to the vain customs of the world, have not the righte-

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(m) Hof. iv. 9. (n) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

ousness of the pharisees, with what propriety can they be called, I will not say, *true ministers*, but even *pious deists*?

Though every candidate for the sacred ministry may not be in circumstances to declare, with St. Paul, *I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day*: yet all who aspire to that important office, should, at least, be able to say with sincerity; *Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man* (o). Such were the morals and the conduct of a Socrates and an Epictetus: and worshippers like these, *coming from the east and from the west*, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, *while the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness* (p).

NOTE I.

WHEN I first undertook the translation of the valuable work, which is here presented to the public, it was the desire of several respectable persons, that it should come out accompanied with some account of the truly venerable author. That such an account might be generally interesting and beneficial, I was fully persuaded; but a consciousness of my inability for such an undertaking disposed me rather to decline engaging in it. At length, overcome by the repeated intreaties of my friends, I determined, as far as possible, to comply with their wishes; not, indeed, by

B 4

writing

(o) Acts xxiv. 16. (p) Matt. viii. 11, 12.

writing a compleat life of the late reverend J. W. de la Flècheré, but by subjoining biographical notes to several of the most principal traits in the moral character of St. Paul. Not long, however, after this determination was made public, some memoirs of his life were collected and published by a man of uncommon eminence in the christian world. Some parts of this work I read with much satisfaction, and particularly those pages, which were furnished by Mr. Benson, who seems perfectly to have understood the character he endeavoured to exhibit. Here I should have dropt my design, as entirely useless, had not several of the author's most esteemed friends insisted, that I should proceed upon my proposed plan: in consequence of whose earnest solicitations, the following notes are offered, as a kind of supplement to the account that has already appeared.

This eminent minister was born at Nyon in Switzerland in the year 1729, and was the youngest son of Colonel de la Flècheré, whose family is one of the most respectable in the Canton of Berne, and a branch of an earldom of Savoy. He passed the early part of his life at Nyon, where he soon discovered an elevated turn of mind, accompanied with an unusual degree of vivacity. After having made a good proficiency in school learning, he was removed with his two brothers to Geneva, where he was distinguished equally by his superior abilities and his uncommon application. The two first prizes for which he stood a candidate he carried away from a number of competitors, several of whom were nearly related to the professors: and on these occasions he was complimented by his superiors in a very flattering manner. During

During his residence at this place, he allowed himself but little time, either for recreation, refreshment, or rest. After confining himself closely to his studies all the day, he would frequently consume the greater part of the night in noting down whatever had occurred, in the course of his reading, peculiarly worthy of observation. Here he acquired that true classical taste, which was so frequently and justly admired by his intimate friends, and which all his studied plainness could never conceal. Here also he laid the foundation of that extensive and accurate knowledge, for which he was afterwards distinguished both in philosophical and theological researches. After quitting Geneva, he was sent by his father to Lentzbourg, a small town in the Swiss Cantons, where he not only acquired the german language, but diligently prosecuted his other studies, to which he ever discovered a passionate attachment. On his return from this place, he continued sometime at home, studying the hebrew language and perfecting his acquaintance with mathematical learning.

His early piety was equally remarkable with his early attainments. From his childhood he was impressed with a deep sense of the majesty of God, and a constant fear of offending him. His early acquaintance with the Holy scriptures guarded him, on the one hand, from the snares of infidelity, and preserved him, on the other, from many of the vices, peculiar to youth. His conversation was modest, and his whole conduct marked with a degree of rectitude, not usually to be found in early life. He manifested an extraordinary turn for religious meditation; and those little productions, which gained him the greatest

applause, at this early period, were chiefly of a serious tendency. His filial obedience and his brotherly affection were exemplary; nor is it remembered, that he ever uttered one unbecoming expression in either of those characters. He was a constant reprover of sin; and his modest freedom in this respect is said, once to have offended a mother, whom he tenderly loved. While she was, on some occasion, expressing herself in too warm a manner to one of the family, he turned his eye upon her with a gentle reproof. She was displeased with the modest reprehension, and repaid it with some severity, which he received with the utmost submission, making only the following reply; when I am smitten *on one cheek*, and especially by a hand I love so well, I am taught to *turn the other also*. This expression was not employed with an air of bravado, but with a look of so much tender affection, that the indignation of his mother was instantly turned into a look of pleasing admiration.

Those who are set apart by God for eminent services in his church, are frequently distinguished, in the early part of their lives, by striking peculiarities, which awaken in all around them an expectation of something extraordinary in their future character. Of this kind was the following circumstance. During the early part of M. de la Flècheré's residence at Geneva, his sister, Madame de Botens, who had taken a house in that city for the convenience of her brothers, was visited by a widow lady from Nyon. This lady was accompanied by her three sons, who were not the most happily disposed, and whose improper conduct at this time provoked her to so uncommon

common a degree, as to extort from her a hasty imprecation. Our pious young student was present upon this occasion, and so struck was he with the unnatural carriage of this exasperated mother, that instantly starting from his chair, he addressed her in a very powerful remonstrance. From the following scripture, *Parents, provoke not your children, &c.* he reasoned with her in an affecting and pointed manner. He observed and lamented the difficulties of her situation; but entreated her to struggle against them with discretion, and not with impatience. He exhorted her to educate her children in the fear of God, and to second such education by her own pious example. And after assuring her, that her conduct, on the present occasion, had filled him with the utmost horror, and that he could not but tremble for the consequences of it, he concluded his address by alarming her fears, lest the imprecation she had uttered should be followed by some unexpected family affliction. That same day the widow, in her return to Nyon, embarked upon the lake, where she was overtaken with a tremendous storm and brought to the very point of perishing. In the midst of her danger, the words of her young prophet, as she ever afterwards termed M. de la Fléchère, were deeply impressed upon her mind. But they shortly returned upon her in a more forcible manner, with the melancholy intelligence, that two of her sons were lost upon the lake, and the third crushed to death at one of the gates of Geneva. At this time our author was not more than fourteen years of age.

T R A I T I I.

HIS CHRISTIAN PIETY.

IT has been made sufficiently plain, under the preceding article, that St. Paul was possessed of a good degree of piety from his very infancy. Having been brought up in the fear of God by his father, who is supposed to have been a zealous pharisee, he was afterwards instructed at the feet of Gamaliel, a pious doctor of the Law, to whose wisdom and moderation St. Luke has borne an honorable testimony (a). And so greatly had he profited in his youth by these inestimable privileges, that *touching the righteousness, which is of the Law, he was blameless*. But this piety was not sufficient under the new Testament.

To become a christian, and a true minister of the Gospel, it is necessary to have, not only the piety of a *sincere deist*, or of a *devout jew*, as St. Paul had before his conversion, but also those higher degrees of piety, which that apostle possessed, after he had received the gift of deep repentance toward God and living faith in Jesus Christ. The basis of piety, among the jews, was a knowledge of God, as *Creator, Protector, and Re-*
warder

(a) Acts v. 34.

warder: but, in order to have christian piety, it is necessary, that to this knowledge of God, as *Creator, &c.* should be added that of God the *Redeemer*, God the *Destroyer of all our evils*, God our *Saviour*; or in other words, the knowledge of Jesus Christ. *This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent* (b).

But who can truly know, I will not say *his Saviour*, but merely his *need* of a Saviour, without first becoming acquainted with his own heart, and receiving there a lively impression both of his sin and his danger? A student in theology, who has not yet submitted himself to the maxim of Solon, *know thyself*; and who has never mourned under that sense of our natural ignorance and depravity, which forced Socrates to confess the want of a *divine instructor*; — a candidate, I say, who is wholly unacquainted with himself, instead of eagerly soliciting the imposition of hands, should rather seek after a true understanding of the censure, which Christ once passed upon the pastor of the Laodicean church: *Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked* (c).

If a young man steals into the ministry without this knowledge, far from being able to preach the Gospel, he will not even comprehend that *first* evangelical principle, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (d). And in-
stead

(b) John xvii. 3. (c) Rev. iii. 17. (d) Matt. v. 3

stead of devoutly offering up to GOD the prayers of an assembled congregation, he will constantly begin the sacred office by an act of hypocrisy, in saying — *Almighty Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have offended against thy holy Laws. There is no health in us. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.* After making these confessions in public, when he is interrogated in private respecting that *misery and condemnation*, under a sense of which he so lately appeared to groan, he will not scruple immediately to contradict, what he has so plainly expressed : thus discovering to every impartial observer, that when he prays in public, he prays, either as a child, who understands not what he repeats ; or as a deceiver, who appears to believe, what he really gives no credit to, and that merely for the sake of enjoying the pension of a minister, and his rank in society.

What is here said of ministers, is equally applicable to christians in general. If any one dares to approach the sacramental table, there to make a profession of being redeemed from eternal death by the death of Christ, before he is deeply humbled under a sense of the condemnation due to his sin : can such a one be said to perform an act of piety ? Is he not rather engaged in performing an act of vain ceremony and presumptuous dissimulation in the presence of GOD ? The feigned humiliation of such a communicant, would resemble

resemble that of a rebel subject, who, without any consciousness that his actions had merited death, should cast himself, from motives of interest, at the feet of his prince, and affect to rejoice under a sense of that undeserved clemency, which permitted him to live. All our professions of faith in Christ are tinged, more or less, with hypocrisy; unless preceded by that painful conviction of past errors, whence alone can cordially flow those humiliating confessions, with which we are accustomed to begin our sacred services.

The true christian, and consequently, the true minister, is constrained to cry out, with St. Paul, when he discovered the purity of Jehovah's Law and the greatness of his own guilt: *The law is spiritual, and demands an obedience correspondent to its nature; but I am carnal, sold under sin: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do. I know, that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. O wretched man, that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death* (e) ?

In this manner the true penitent, weary and heavy laden, makes his approaches to the Saviour; and while he continues to implore his grace and favour, an incomprehensible change takes place in his soul. His groans are suddenly turned into songs of deliverance, and he is enabled to adopt the triumphant language of the great apostle: *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; for the law*

(e) Rom. vii. 14—24.

law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. There is therefore now no condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit (f).

Every true follower of Christ, therefore, and especially, every true minister of the Gospel, has really experienced the evil of sin, the inability of man to free himself from such evil, and the efficacy of that remedy, which endued the first christians with so extraordinary a degree of purity, power, and joy. And in testimony of the virtue of this sovereign remedy, every such follower has a right to declare with his happy predecessors, *We give thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (g).*

When a preacher is possessed of *christian piety*; or in other words, when he has made his peace with God, by that *deep repentance* which enables us to die unto sin, and by that *living faith* which unites us to Christ, he naturally invites the world to embrace a Saviour, who has wrought for him so wonderful a deliverance: and this invitation he enforces with all the power and warmth, which must ever accompany deep sensibility. After having

(f) Rom, vii. 25. viii. 1, 2. (g) Coll. i. 12—14.

ing believed with the heart to the obtaining of righteousness, he is prepared to confess with his lips, and to testify of his salvation: crying out, as sincerely as Simeon, but in a sense far more compleat, *Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace; for according to thy word, mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* "Here," says Mr. Ostervald, "may be applied, what was spoken by our blessed Lord — *A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things.* Erasmus speaks the same thing — *Nihil potentius ad exitandos bonos affectus, quam piorum affectuum fontem habere in pectore. Si vis me flere, dolendum est, &c. i. e. following the idea of the author, You will never win others over to a religious life, unless you yourself are first possessed of piety. This inspires thoughts, dispositions, and words, which nothing else can produce. It is this, that animates the voice, the gesture, and every action of the christian preacher. When he is thus grounded in piety, it is difficult to conceive with what facility, and with what success he labors, still enjoying an unspeakable sweetness in himself. Then it is, that he is truly sensible of his vocation; then he speaks in the cause of God, and then only he is in a proper situation to affect others."*

It appeared so necessary to the fathers, who composed the synod of Berne, that every minister should be possessed of solid piety, that they believed

lieved it impossible for a man to be a good catechist without it. After recommending it to pastors to explain among the youth, the Lord's prayer and the Apostles' creed, they add: "*This will be abundantly more effectual, if first of all, we are careful that Jesus Christ may arise in our own hearts. The fire, with which we should then be animated, would soon stir up and warm the docile minds of children. Otherwise, that which reason alone draws from books, and is taught by other men, is no more than a human work, and will be ineffectual, till the great master, the Holy Spirit itself, becomes of the party, creating, renewing, and regenerating to a celestial and eternal life (h).*"

REFLECTIONS

Upon the second trait of the character of St. Paul.

1. **T**HE *experimental* knowledge of our misery as sinners, and of our salvation, as sinners redeemed, is the portion of every believer under the Gospel. If we are destitute of this twofold knowledge, we are yet in a state of dangerous ignorance, and are denominated christians in vain: for *christian humility* has its source in the knowledge of our corruption, as *christian charity* flows from a knowledge of the great salvation, which Christ

(h) Acts of the Synod, Chap. xxxiv,

Christ has procured for us: and if these two graces are not resident in our hearts, our religion is but the shadow of christianity.

2. As there are some persons, whose physiognomy is strongly marked, and who have something peculiarly striking in the whole turn of their countenance; so there are some, the traits of whose moral character are equally striking, and whose conversion is distinguished by uncommon circumstances. Such was the apostle Paul. But a train of wonderful occurrences is by no means necessary to conversion. For example — It is not necessary, that all believers should be actually cast to the earth: or that groaning beneath the weight of their sins, and under the conviction of a twofold blindness, they should continue in prayer for three days and nights, without either eating or drinking. But it is absolutely necessary, that they should be sensible of an extreme sorrow for having offended a gracious God; that they should condemn themselves and their vices by an unfeigned repentance; and that confessing the depravity of their whole heart, they should abandon themselves to that sincere distress which refuses all consolation, except that which is from above. Neither is it necessary, that they should hear a voice from heaven, that they should see a light brighter than the Sun, or behold, in a vision, the minister chosen to bring them consolation in the name of the Lord Jesus. But it is absolutely necessary

necessary, that they should hear the word of God, that they should be illuminated by the Gospel, and receive directions from any messenger sent for their relief; till, placing their whole confidence in God through a gracious Redeemer, they feel a new and heavenly nature produced within them. This *sincere repentance* and this *living faith*, or, which is the same thing, this *christian piety*, is strictly required of every believer under the new Testament.

3. *Christian piety* constitutes the great difference, that is observed between true ministers and unworthy pastors. The latter preach, chiefly, either in order to obtain benefices, or to preserve them; or, perhaps, to relieve one another in the discharge of those duties, which they esteem heavy and painful. But the desire of communicating to sinners that spiritual knowledge, which is *more precious than rubies*, is the grand motive for preaching with the true ministers of God. They publish Christ, like St. Paul, from sentiment and inclination; exposing themselves even to persecution on account of preaching the Gospel, like those faithful Evangelists, who, when commanded to teach no more in the name of Jesus, answered with equal respect and resolution; *Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things, which we have seen and heard* (i).

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(i) Acts iv. 19, 20.

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4. It is worthy of observation, that St. Paul supplicates not only for all public teachers, but for every private believer in the church, the highest degrees of grace and christian experience. *I cease not, saith he to the Ephesians, to make mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know, what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance, in the saints: and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe (k).* And the same end, which this apostle proposed to himself in his private supplications, St. John also proposed to himself in writing his public epistles — *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full (l).* As though he had said, we write, if haply we may excite you to seek after higher degrees of faith, charity and obedience, *that being rooted and grounded in love, ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God (m).* The attentive reader will easily perceive, that what was once the subject of St. Paul's most ardent prayer, is at this day

(k) Eph. i. 16—19. (l) 1 John i. 3, 4. (m) Eph. iii. 17—19.

day considered, by nominal christians in general, as a proper subject for the most pointed raillery.

5. Those ministers, who are not yet furnished with christian experience, and who are not seeking after it, as *the pearl of great price*, held out to us in the Gospel, are not yet truly converted to the christian faith: and (I repeat it after Mr. Osterwald) being destitute of *christian piety*, far from being in circumstances to preach the Gospel, they are not able even to comprehend it. These are they, *who having a form of godliness, deny the power thereof* (n). And the greatest eulogium, that can be pronounced upon such characters, is that, with which St. Paul honored the unbelieving zealots of his time: *I bear them record, that they have a zeal for God*; but that zeal is unaccompanied with any true knowledge, either of man's weakness, or the Redeemer's power: *For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one, that believeth* (o).

6. Whoever has not experienced that conviction of sin, and that repentance, which is described by St. Paul in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, though, like Nicodemus, he may be a *doctor in Israel*, yet he shall never see the kingdom of God. Totally carnal, and sa-

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(n) 2 Tim. iii. 5. (o) Rom. x. 2—4.

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tified to continue so, he neither understands nor desires that regeneration, which the Gospel proposes and insists upon. He endeavours not to fathom the sense of those important words: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God* (p). He considers those, who are born of the spirit as rank enthusiasts, and disdains to make any serious enquiry respecting the foundation of their hope. If his acquaintance with the letter of the scripture did not restrain him, he would tauntingly address the artless question of Nicodemus to every minister, who preaches the doctrine of regeneration — *How can a man be born, when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born* (q)? And unless he was withheld by a sense of politeness, he would rudely repeat to every zealous follower of St. Paul the ungracious expression of Festus — *Thou art beside thyself; much mystic learning doth make thee mad* (r).

7. On the contrary, a minister, who is distinguished by the second trait of the character of St. Paul, at the same time proportionably possesses every disposition, necessary to form an evangelical pastor: since it is not possible for *christian piety* to exist without the brilliant light of *truth*, and the burning zeal of *charity*. And every minister, who has this light and this love, is enriched with those two powerful resources, which enabled the

(p) John iii. 3. (q) John iii. 4. (r) Acts xxvi. 24.

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the first christians to act as citizens of heaven, and the first ministers as ambassadors of Christ.

NOTE II.

NOTWITHSTANDING the *early piety* of M. de la Fléchère, of which such honorable mention has been made in the preceding note, it appears, that he continued, for a long time, a perfect stranger to the true nature of christianity. He was naturally of a high and ambitious turn, though his ambition was sufficiently refined for religious as well as scientific pursuits. He aspired after rectitude, and was anxious to possess every moral perfection. He counted much upon the dignity of human nature, and was ambitious to act in a manner becoming his exalted ideas of that dignity. And here he outstripped the multitude in an uncommon degree. He was rigidly just in his dealings, and inflexibly true to his word; he was a strict observer of his several duties in every relation of life; his sentiments were liberal, and his charity profuse; he was prudent in his conduct, and courteous in his deportment; he was a diligent enquirer after truth, and a strenuous advocate for virtue; he was frequent in sacred meditations, and was a regular attendant at public worship. Possessed of so many moral accomplishments, while he was admired by his friends, it is no wonder, that he should cast a look of self-complacency upon his own character, and consider himself, with respect to his attainments in virtue, abundantly superior to the common

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common herd of mankind. But while he was taken up in congratulating himself, upon his own fancied eminence in piety, he was an absolute stranger to that unfeigned sorrow for sin, which is the first step toward the kingdom of God. It was not till after he had resided some time in England, that he became experimentally acquainted with the nature of true repentance. By what particular providence he was led to a minute investigation of his own heart, or at what particular time, cannot be easily ascertained; but we have ample testimony, that in his twenty-sixth year his knowledge of himself was as *solid*, as it had formerly been *superficial*. In that year he addressed an epistle to his brother on the subject of internal religion, where, after insisting on the vanity of every earthly pursuit, he gives the following description of the change that had taken place in his own mind.

" I speak from experience. I have been successively
 " deluded by all those desires, which I here so sincerely reprobate, and sometimes I have been the
 " sport of them all at once. This will appear incredible, except to those, who have discovered,
 " that the heart of unregenerate man is nothing
 " more than a chaos of obscurity, and a mass of
 " contradictions. If you have any acquaintance with
 " yourself, you will readily subscribe to this description of the human heart: and if you are without this
 " acquaintance, then rest assured, my dear brother,
 " that whatever your pursuit may be, you are as far
 " from true happiness, as the most wretched of
 " men. The meteor you are following still flies before you; frequently it disappears, and never
 " shews

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“ shews itself but to allure you to the brink of some
“ unlooked for precipice. Every unconverted man
“ must necessarily come under one or other of the
“ following descriptions. He is either a *voluptuary*,
“ a *worldly minded person*, or a *pharisaical philosopher*;
“ or perhaps like myself, he may be all of these at
“ the same time: and, what is still more extraor-
“ dinary, he may be so, not only without *believing*,
“ but even without once *suspecting* it. Indeed, no-
“ thing is more common among men, than an
“ entire blindness to their own real characters. How
“ long have I placed my happiness in mere chimeras!
“ How often have I grounded my vain hopes upon
“ imaginary foundations! I have been constantly
“ employed in framing designs for my own fe-
“ licity; but my disappointments have been as fre-
“ quent and various as my projects. In the midst of
“ my idle reveries, how often have I said to myself,
“ ‘ Drag thy weary feet but to the summit of yonder
“ eminence, a situation beyond which the world has
“ nothing to present more adequate to thy wishes,
“ and there thou shalt sit down in a state of repose.’
“ On my arrival, however, at the spot proposed, a
“ sad discovery has taken place. The whole scene
“ has appeared more barren than the valley I had
“ quitted; and the point of happiness, which I
“ lately imagined it possible to have touched with my
“ finger, has presented itself at a greater distance
“ than ever.

“ If hitherto, my dear brother, you have beguiled
“ yourself with prospects of the same visionary na-
“ ture, never expect to be more successful in your
“ future

" future pursuits. One labor will only succeed ano-
 " ther, making way for continual discontent and
 " chagrin. Open your heart, and there you will
 " discover the source of that painful inquietude, to
 " which, by your own confession, you have been long
 " a prey. Examine its secret recesses, and you will
 " discover there sufficient proofs of the following
 " truths — *The heart is deceitful above all things,*
 " *and desperately wicked. All have sinned, and come*
 " *short of the glory of God. The thoughts of man's*
 " *heart are only evil, and that continually. The na-*
 " *tural man understandeth not the things of the spirit of*
 " *God* On the discovery of these, and other im-
 " portant truths, you will be convinced that man is
 " an apostate being, composed of a sensual rebellious
 " body, and a soul immersed in pride, self-love, and
 " ignorance: nay more, you will perceive it a phy-
 " sical impossibility, that man should ever become
 " truly happy, till he is cast, as it were, into a new
 " mould, and created a second time. For my own
 " part, when I first began to know myself, I saw,
 " I *felt* that man is an undefinable animal, partly of
 " a bestial, and partly of an infernal nature. This
 " discovery shocked my self-love, and filled me with
 " the utmost horror. I endeavoured, for some time,
 " to throw a palliating disguise over the wretched-
 " ness of my condition; but the impression it had
 " already made upon my heart was too deep to be
 " erased. It was to no purpose, that I reminded
 " myself of the morality of my conduct. It was in
 " vain, that I recollected the many encomiums that
 " had been passed upon my early piety and virtue.

“ And it was to little avail, that I sought to cast a
“ mist before my eyes by reasonings like these — If
“ conversion implies a total change, who has been
“ converted in these days? Why dost thou imagine
“ thyself worse than thou really art? Thou art a be-
“ liever in God, and in Christ; thou art a christian;
“ thou hast injured no person; thou art neither a
“ drunkard, nor an adulterer; thou hast discharged
“ thy duties, not only in a general way, but with
“ more than ordinary exactness; thou art a strict
“ attendant at church; thou art accustomed to pray
“ more regularly than others, and frequently with
“ a good degree of fervor; make thyself perfectly
“ easy: moreover, Jesus Christ has suffered for thy
“ sins, and his merit will supply every thing that is
“ lacking on thy part. It was by reasonings of this
“ nature, that I endeavoured to conceal from myself
“ the deplorable state of my heart: and I am
“ ashamed, my dear brother, I repeat it, I am
“ ashamed, that I suffered myself so long to be
“ deluded by the artifices of Satan, and the devices
“ of my own heart. God himself has invited me,
“ a cloud of apostles, prophets, and martyrs have
“ exhorted me, and my conscience, animated by
“ those sparks of grace which are latent in every
“ breast, has urged me to enter in at the strait gate:
“ but, notwithstanding all this, a subtil temper, a de-
“ luding world, and a deceived heart, have con-
“ stantly turned the balance, for above these twenty
“ years, in favor of the broad way. I have past the
“ most lovely part of my life in the service of these
“ tyrannical masters, and am ready to declare in the
“ face

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“ face of the universe, that all my reward has consisted in disquietude and remorse. Happy, had I listened to the earliest invitations of grace, and broken their iron yoke from off my neck !” *

The internal revolution, above described, may be said to have formed a grand epoch in the life of this valuable man. From this time his hopes and his fears, his desires and pursuits were totally changed. From the heights of self-exaltation, he sunk into the depths of self-abhorrence : and from shining in the foremost ranks of the virtuous, he placed himself on a level with the very chief of sinners. Conviction made way for unfeigned repentance, and repentance laid a solid foundation for *christian piety*. His sorrow for sin was succeeded by a consciousness of the Almighty's favor, and the pangs of remorse gave way to the joys of remission. Believing on Jesus, as the scripture hath said, he found in him a well of consolation *springing up into everlasting life*. All his wanderings were, at once, happily terminated, his doubts were removed, his tears were dried up, and he began to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. His conversion was not imaginary, but real. It not only influenced his sentiments, but extended to his conduct. Whom he had found a Saviour, he determined to follow as a guide : and so unalterable was this determination, that from the very hour in which it was formed, it is not known, that he ever cast a wishful look behind him. A cloud of witnesses are ready to testify, that, from his earliest acquaintance with the truths of the gospel, he continued to walk

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worthy

* I need, I think, make no excuse for having translated so large a portion of this epistle.

worthy of his high vocation, *growing in grace*, and *adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*. From this period of his life, he became truly exemplary for *christian piety*. But this piety was of too exalted a nature to admit of any adequate description. They who saw him only at a distance, revered him as a man of God; while they, who enjoyed a nearer acquaintance with him, were held in a state of constant admiration at his attainments in the divine life. He appeared to enjoy an uninterrupted fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Every day was with him a day of solemn self-dedication, and every hour an hour of praise or prayer. Naturally formed for preeminence, no common degrees of grace were sufficient to satisfy his unbounded desires. He towered above the generality of christians, *earnestly desiring the best gifts*, and anxious to walk in the *most excellent way*. While others are content to taste the living stream, he traced that stream to its source, and lived at the fountain head of blessedness. He was familiar with invisible objects, and constantly walked as in the presence of God. To those, who were much conversant with him, he appeared as an inhabitant of a better world; so perfectly dead was he to the enjoyments of the present life, and so wholly detached from its anxious cares. Wherever he was called by the providence of God, he was acknowledged as a *burning and shining light*. The common lights of christians were eclipsed before him; and even his spiritual friends could never stand in his presence, without being overwhelmed with a consciousness of their own inferiority and unprofitableness.

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While they have seen him rising, as it were, upon the wings of an eagle, they have been confounded at their inability to pursue his flight; and while he has given way to the emotions of his fervent love, they have blushed at their own ingratitude and lukewarmness. *The candle of the Lord eminently shone upon his head, and the secret of God was upon his tabernacle. When he went out through the city, or took his seat in the company of the righteous, he was saluted with unusual reverence, and received as an angel of God. The young men saw him and hid themselves; and the aged arose and stood up.* Even those, who were honored as princes among the people of God, refrained talking, and laid their hand upon their mouth. *When the ear heard him, then it blessed him; and when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him.* His character was free from those inconsistencies which are too generally observable among the professors of christianity. Whether he sat in the house, or whether he walked by the way; in his hours of retirement, and in his public labors, he was constantly actuated by the same spirit. When he spoke — his conversation was in heaven: and the hearts of his intimate friends still burn within them, on every recollection of the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. When he was silent — his very air and countenance bespoke an angelic mind, absorbed in the contemplation of God. When he was engaged in the ordinary actions of life, he performed them with such a becoming seriousness, that they assumed a striking and important appearance. In all the changing circumstances of life, he looked and acted like a man, whose

treasure was laid up in heaven. There his affections were immoveably fixed, and thitherward he was continually tending with all the powers of his soul: he spoke of it, as the subject of his constant meditation, and looked to it, as travellers to their appointed home. At times, when the pious breathings of his soul were too forcible to be repressed, he would break forth into expressions of adoration among his spiritual associates, and cry out, while tears of joy were bursting from his eyes — *My God! My Saviour! Thou art mine! a wretch unworthy of thy notice! Yet thou hast visited me with thy mercy, and honored me with thy favor! I adore thine unfathomable love! Ye who have tasted of his grace, assist me to magnify his name.* He was an instrument always in tune: and none can tell, but those who have heard, how sweetly it would answer to the touch of him, that strung it. He was an instrument of uncommon compass, and wondrously adapted to every occasion. Every breath that swept over the chords of this living lyre drew from it some according sound: if from man, it produced strains of affection and sympathy; if from God, it called forth higher sounds of gratitude and devotion. His piety suffered no event to pass by unimproved. Every object led him into the presence of God, and every occurrence gave rise to a train of serious reflections. I shall close this note by relating an anecdote, which may serve to illustrate this part of his character. Travelling some years ago with a friend through part of Italy, as they approached the Appian-way, he directed the driver to stop before he entered upon it. He then ordered the chaise door
to

to be opened, assuring his fellow-traveller, that his heart would not suffer him to ride over that ground, upon which the apostle Paul had formerly walked chained to a soldier, on account of preaching the everlasting Gospel. As soon as he had set his foot upon this old Roman road, he took off his hat; and walking on, with his eyes lifted up to heaven, returned thanks to God in a most fervent prayer, for that light, those truths, and that influence of the Holy Spirit, which were continued to the present day. He rejoiced that England was favored with the Gospel in its purity; and devoutly implored, that Rome might again have the truths of that Gospel declared in those churches, which were disgraced with a worship little superior to that of ancient Athens. He then took a view of the exemplary life, the extensive travels, and astonishing labors of the great apostle. He recounted his sufferings when a prisoner, and his trials when at liberty; his rigid self-denial, and his voluntary poverty for the furtherance of the Gospel. He spoke of his painful ministry and his violent persecutions, enlarging with peculiar energy upon his last journey from Jerusalem to Rome. He then ran over his experience — his faith, his love, his abundant revelations, and his constant communion with the Lord Jesus Christ: demonstrating, that without such communion, he could never have supported the sharp conflicts and repeated sufferings, to which he was daily exposed. Here he adverted to his own situation with a degree of gratitude that surpasses all description. What a miracle of mercy, said he, that a christian, hated and despised as he is by all men, is

yet suffered to live: and that we, who desire to be such, can travel at this day unmolested among those, who abhor the truth as it is in Jesus. Their ancestors were stained with the blood of the innocent; and was the Gospel to be proposed in its purity to the present generation, they would rush upon the preacher of it, as so many beasts of prey, if He who restrained the lions from devouring Daniel, was not present to control their destructive zeal. These remarks were continued for a long time together, sweetly intermixed with occasional prayer and praise. He breathed nothing but devotion, and had he not been prevented by the presence of the driver, such were his feelings on treading this celebrated road, that he would certainly have acted like St. Paul, when he retired to the river side, *where prayer was wont to be made.*

TRAIT III.

HIS INTIMATE UNION WITH CHRIST BY FAITH.

I AM come, said the good shepherd, *that my sheep might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly* (a). *I am the light of the world* (b). *I am the way, the truth, and the life* (c). *I am the vine; ye are the branches* (d). The faithful minister understands the signification of these mysterious expressions. He walks in this way, he follows

(a) John x. 10, 11, (b) John viii. 12, (c) John xiv. 6.

(d) John xv. 5.

follows this *light*, he embraces this *truth*, and enjoys this *life* in all its rich abundance. Constantly united to his Lord, by a humble faith, a lively hope, and an ardent charity, he is enabled to say, with St. Paul; *The love of Christ constraineth me; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they, which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, who died for them, and rose again (e). We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory (f). For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; but liveth unto God: we likewise reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord (g).*

This living faith is the source, from whence all the sanctity of the christian is derived, and all the power of the true minister: it is the medium, through which that sap of grace and consolation, those streams of peace and joy, are perpetually flowing, which enrich the believing soul, and make it fruitful in every good work: or, to speak without a metaphor, from this powerful grace proceeds that love of God and man, which influences us to think and act, either as members, or as ministers, of Jesus Christ. The character of the christian is determined according to the

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strength

(e) 2 Cor. v. 14. (f) Col. iii. 3, 4. (g) Rom. vi. 5, 9, 11.

strength or weakness of his faith. If the faith of St. Paul had been weak or wavering, his portrait would have been unworthy of our contemplation: he would necessarily have fallen into doubt and discouragement; he might probably have sunk into sin, as St. Peter plunged into the sea; he must, sooner or later, have lost his spiritual vigor, and have made the same appearance in the church, as those ministers and christians, who are influenced by the maxims of the world. The effects of faith are still truly mysterious, though our Lord has explained them in as intelligible a manner, as their nature will permit: *He that abideth in me, by a living faith, and in whom I abide, by the light of my word and the power of my spirit, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and being withered, is cast into the fire and burned. Herein is my father glorified, that, united to me as the branches to the vine, ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples* (h).

Penetrated with these great truths, and daily cleaving more firmly to his living head, the true minister expresses what the natural man cannot receive, and what few pastors of the present age are able to comprehend, though St. Paul not only experienced it in his own heart, but openly declares it in the following remarkable passage: *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet, not I, but Christ liveth*

(h) John xv, 6, 7, 8.

liveth in me : and the life, which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (i).

NOTE III.

THE life of M. de la Flècheré might with the strictest propriety be termed a life of faith. Through the whole of his christian pilgrimage he *walked by faith, and not by sight*. By faith he embraced the truths of the Gospel, when they were first proposed to him in plainness and simplicity ; not barely admitting, but *relying* upon them with an entire confidence. By faith he relinquished the world, while it presented him with many a flattering prospect, *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*. By faith he endured the displeasure of his friends, and patiently suffered their contradiction, *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world*, and having *respect unto the recompense of reward*. By faith he engaged himself in the christian warfare, unmoved either by its difficulties, or its dangers ; and by faith *he endured to the end, as seeing him, who is invisible*. Though his faith was always encreasing, yet, during his christian profession, there never was a time in which he was regarded, as a man weak or wavering in the faith of the Gospel. On the contrary, he seems to have borne a strong resemblance to those two extraordinary characters, whose faith, upon their very first application to Christ, not only procured his approbation,

(i) Gal. ii. 20.

approbation, but appeared to excite his astonishment. His faith was frequently put to the severest tests; but, after being tried to the uttermost, it remained unshaken. He regarded the promises of God as the firm supports of this grace, nor was he ever seen to stagger at any of these *promises through unbelief*. If the promise was great and important; if its full accomplishment was even doubted by his most esteemed fellow laborers; yet, this holy man continued *strong in faith, giving glory to God: being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform*. By this mighty grace he engaged in the most difficult duties, and saw many mountainous obstacles removed from his path. By this, he was enabled to bear *the heat and burden of the day*: and by this, notwithstanding all the discouragements, that could be thrown in his way, he went on from conquering to conquer.

The nature of his faith was evidenced by the works it produced. He stood not as a cumberer of the ground in his master's vineyard; but, *like a tree planted by the water-side*, he brought forth his fruit in due season. He stood as an humble representation of that tree of life, which grows by the river of Paradise; for in his fruit there was a wonderful variety, and every successive season was with him a season of spiritual plenty. He not only bore that delicate kind of fruit, which requires the sunshine of prosperity; but produced, with equal luxuriance, those hardier graces, which can only be matured by the rigors of adversity.

It is the privilege of every christian to be united to Christ; that as He and the Father are *one*, so his disciples

disciples may be *one* with their adorable master. This privilege, in its lowest sense, is inconceivably estimable in the church of Christ; but by this eminent servant of God it was enjoyed in a more than ordinary degree. His union with the blessed Jesus, answerable to the greatness of his faith, was intimate and constant. He experienced the fulfilment of that condescending promise; *If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me*: he obeyed the summons, and received the promised visitant; and from that time his heart became the dwelling-place of Christ. There he experienced the teachings of uncreated wisdom, and held ineffable communion with the *author and finisher of faith*, imbibing abundantly the spirit of his divine instructor, and sitting *under his shadow with great delight*. By this sacred intercourse, continued from day to day, his union with Christ became so entire, that he was at length enabled to adopt the expressive declaration of the great apostle — *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*: &c.

The strictness of this union was evinced by his whole disposition and carriage. The mind that was in Christ, was discovered also in him. He denied himself, he took up his cross, and trod in the footsteps of his master. He cheerfully submitted to the yoke of Jesus, and was effectually taught by his example, to be *meek and lowly in heart*. He breathed the language of universal benevolence, and copied the character of his Lord with so great exactness, that *all men took knowledge of him, that he had been with Jesus*. Fellowship with Christ is with the generality of

of christians, a state of much uncertainty, and subject to many changes; but by this holy man it was well nigh uninterruptedly enjoyed, through all the different stages of the spiritual life. It was his consolation in the season of adversity, and his glory in the day of rejoicing: it sustained him in the hour of temptation, and afforded him peace in the midst of trouble. At home or abroad, he still was sitting with Christ Jesus in heavenly places. In sickness or in health, he daily conferred with this physician of inestimable value. In honor or dishonor, he still was dignified with the favor of this Everlasting King. In short, the whole circle of his christian friends are ready to testify, that neither *tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor life, nor death*, were able to separate this faithful pastor from the love of Christ: for whom he suffered the loss of all things, and by whose gracious presence that loss was abundantly overpaid.

T R A I T I V.

*HIS EXTRAORDINARY VOCATION TO THE
HOLY MINISTRY, AND IN WHAT THAT
MINISTRY CHIEFLY CONSISTS.*

EVERY professor of christianity is acquainted with the honor, which our Lord conferred upon the apostle Paul, in not only calling him to a participation of the christian faith, but by appointing him also to publish the everlasting Gospel.

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A just sense of this double honor penetrated the heart of that apostle with the most lively gratitude — *I give thanks*, saith he, *to Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief: and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant in me, with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life* (a). The evangelical ministry, to which St. Paul was immediately called, is in general the same through every age enlightened by the Gospel, and consists in publishing the truth after such a manner, that the wicked may be converted, and the faithful edified. The commission, which the great apostle received from Christ, contains, essentially, nothing more than the acknowledged duty of every minister of the Gospel. Leave out the miraculous appearance of our Lord; pass over the circumstance of a commission given in an extraordinary manner; substitute the word *sinners* for that of *gentiles*, and instead of *jews*, read *hypocritical professors*; and you will perceive, that, with these immaterial alterations, the commission of St. Paul is the commission of every faithful minister in the church. Observe the

(a) 1 Tim. i. 12—16.

the tenor of it. In person, or by my ambassadors, in a manner either extraordinary, or ordinary, I appoint thee a minister, and a witness of those things, which thou hast seen, or experienced, and of those things, in the which I will appear to thee; and I will deliver thee from the hands of the people, and from the gentiles, i. e. from the hands of hypocritical professors, and from ignorant sinners, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from the darkness of error, to the light of truth, and from the power of Satan to God, i. e. from sin, which is the image of Satan, to holiness, which is the image of God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them, which are sanctified, by faith that is in me (b). Such was the office to which St. Paul was appointed, more especially among the gentile nations; and such, without doubt, is the office of every pastor, at least, within the limits of his particular parish. As for taking the ecclesiastical habit, reading over some pages of a liturgy, solemnizing marriages, baptizing infants, keeping registers, and receiving stipends, these things are merely accidental: and every minister should be able to say, with St. Paul, *Christ sent me not, principally, to baptize, but to preach the Gospel* (c).

It is evident from various passages in the different offices of our church, that our pious reformers

(b) Acts xxvi. 16—18. (c) 1 Cor. i. 17.

formers were unanimously of opinion, that Christ himself appoints, and, in some sort, inspires all true pastors; that He commits the flock to their keeping, and that their principal care is the same with that of the first evangelists, namely, *the conversion of souls*. And truly, the same Lord, who appointed his disciples as *apostles*, or *ocular witnesses* of his resurrection, has also appointed others as *pastors*, or *witnesses of a secondary order*, and *suffragans* of the first evangelists. If the witnesses of a higher order were permitted to see Christ after his resurrection, those of a secondary order have felt the efficacy of his resurrection, *being raised together with him, or regenerated through the reception of a lively hope, by the rising again of Christ from the dead (d)*. So that every true minister, who bears his testimony to the truths of the Gospel, whether it be from the pulpit, or before tribunals, is supported by his own particular experience of Christ's resurrection, as well as by a *conviction* founded upon the depositions of the first witnesses. Now this conviction, and this experience, are by no means confined to the ministering servants of God; but the hearts of the faithful, in their several generations, have been influenced by them both; if it be true, that they have constantly stood prepared, to seal with their blood these two important truths, *Jesus Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification*.
Millions

(d) 1 Pet. i. 3. Col. iii. 1.

Millions of the laity have been called to give this last proof of their faith, and, beyond all doubt, it is abundantly more difficult to bear testimony to the truth upon a scaffold, than from a pulpit.

If St. Paul and the other apostles are considered as persons of a rank far superior to ours, they themselves cry out, *O sirs! we also are men of like passions with you* (e). If it be said, that God inspired the apostles with all the *wisdom and zeal* necessary to fulfil the duties of their high vocation; it may be replied, that our churches implore for their established pastors the same *wisdom and zeal*, grounding such prayers upon the authority of many plain passages of Holy Scripture. *Now unto him, that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all, that we ask or think, according to the power, that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end* (f).

Moreover, it is an error to suppose, that the apostles needed no augmentation of that divine light, by which spiritual objects are discerned. St. Paul who was favored with an extraordinary inspiration, and that sufficient to compose sacred books, in which infallibility is to be found, writes thus to believers: *Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known* (g). A humble, but happy confession! which, on the
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(e) Acts xiv. 15. (f) Eph. iii. 20, 21. (g) 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

one hand, will not suffer us to be discouraged when we are most sensible of our inadequate light; and teaches us, on the other, how necessary it is to make incessant application to the *Father of lights*: equally guarding us against the pride of some, who imagine themselves to have apprehended *all* the truth; and the wilful ignorance of others, who pronounce spiritual knowledge to be *altogether* unattainable.

Now, if the apostle Paul could but imperfectly discern the depths of evangelical truth, and if *angels* themselves *desire to look into these things* (h); who can sufficiently wonder at the presumption of those men, who are so far persuaded of their own infallibility, that they regard all truths, which they are unable to fathom, as the mere reveries of fanaticism? But, turning our eyes, at present, from the pernicious error of these self-exalted christians, let us consider a subject, in which we are more interested, than in the extraordinary vocation of St. Paul to the holy ministry.

REFLECTIONS

Upon the ordinary vocation to the holy ministry.

THE harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into his harvest

(h) 1 Pet. i. 12.

harvest (i). Retaining in memory these remarkable words of our Lord, the conscientious man is incapable of thrusting himself into the holy ministry, without being first duly called thereto by the Lord of the harvest, the great *Shepherd and Bishop of souls*.

The minister of the present age is not ordinarily called to the holy ministry, except by carnal motives, such as his own vanity, or his peculiar taste for a tranquil and indolent life. Perhaps his vocation to the ministry is principally from his father or mother, who have determined, that their son shall enter into holy orders. Very frequently, if the candidate for holy orders had sincerity enough to discover the real inclination of his heart, he might make his submissions to the dignitaries of our church, and say; *Put me, I pray you, into one of the priest's offices that I may eat a piece of bread* (k).

It is not thus with the real believer, who consecrates himself to the holy ministry. He is not ignorant, that *Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest*: and he is perfectly assured, that no man has a right to take upon himself the sacerdotal dignity, *but he that is called of God*, either in an extraordinary manner, as Aaron and St. Paul, or, at least, in an ordinary manner, as Apollos and Timothy (l). As it is a matter of the utmost importance, to understand by what tokens this ordinary

(i) Matt. ix. 37, 38. (k) 1 Sam. ii. 36. (l) Heb. v. 4, 5

ordinary vocation to the holy ministry may be discovered, the following reflections upon so interesting a subject may not be altogether superfluous.

If a young man of virtuous manners is deeply penetrated with this humiliating truth — *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (m). If, further, he is effectually convinced of this consolatory truth — *God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (n). If his natural talents have been strengthened by a liberal education; if the pleasure of doing good is sweeter to him than all the pleasures of sense; if the hope of converting sinners from the error of their way, occupies his mind more agreeably than the idea of acquiring all the advantages of fortune; if the honor of publishing the Gospel is superior, in his eyes, to the honor of becoming the ambassador of an earthly prince: In short, if by a desire, which springs from the fear of God, the love of Christ, and the concern he takes in the salvation of his neighbour, he is led to consecrate himself to the holy ministry; if, in the order of providence, outward circumstances concur with his own designs; and if he solicits the grace and assistance of God with greater eagerness than he seeks the outward vocation from his superiors in the church by the imposition of hands; he may then satisfy himself, that the great High-

(m) Rom. iii. 23.

(n) John iii. 16.

High-Priest of the christian profession has set him apart for the high office, to which he aspires.

When, after serious examination, any student in theology discovers in himself the necessary dispositions mentioned above; then, having received imposition of hands, with faith and humility, from the pastors, who preside in the church, he may solidly conclude, that he has been favored with the *ordinary* vocation. Hence, looking up to the source of the important office, with which he is honored, he can adopt with propriety the language of St. Paul: *I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, for that he hath counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry (o). Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me, yea, wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel: for then I should be found unfaithful to my vocation (p). God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ (q). And, if he becomes not like that wicked and slothful servant, who refused to administer to the necessities of his master's household, he will be able at all times to say: Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every*

(o) 1 Tim. i. 12. (p) 1 Cor. ix. 16. (q) 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

every man's conscience in the sight of God (r).

A person of this description, searching the depths of the human heart, of which he has acquired a competent knowledge by the study of his own, meditating with attention upon the proofs, and with humility upon the mysteries of our holy religion, giving himself up to the study of divine things, and above all, to prayer and to good works, such a pastor may reasonably hope to *grow in grace* and in the knowledge of that powerful Saviour, whom he earnestly proclaims to others. Nor is it probable that such a one will labor altogether in vain. Gradually instructed in the things, which concern the kingdom of God, he will become like the father of a family, bringing forth out of his treasures *things new and old*: and whether he speaks of the *old man*, the earthly nature, which he has *put off* with such extreme pain, or the *new man*, the heavenly nature, which he has *put on* with equal joy (s), he will speak with a conviction so powerful, and a persuasion so constraining, that the careless must necessarily be alarmed, and the faithful encouraged.

N O T E IV.

AS far as nature can furnish a man for offices of a sacred kind, perhaps there never was a person better qualified to sustain the character of a minister

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of

(r) 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

(s) Ephef. iv. 22, 24.

of Jesus Christ, than M. de la Fléchère. His disposition and habits, his sentiments and studies, his reverential awe of God, his insatiable thirst after truth, and his uncommon abhorrence of vice, gave his friends abundant reason to apprehend, that he was marked, at an early age, for the service of the church. Contrary, however, to all expectation, and contrary to the designs of his family, before he had arrived at the age of twenty he manifested views of a very opposite nature. His theological studies gave place to the systems of Vauban and Cohorn, and he evidently preferred the camp to the church. All the remonstrances of friends, on this apparent change in his disposition, were totally ineffectual; and, had it not been for repeated disappointments, he would have wielded another sword than that of the Spirit. Happily, his projects for the field were constantly baffled and blasted by the appointments of that God, who reserved him for a more important scene of action. His choice of the army is, however, to be imputed rather to principle than inclination. On the one hand, he detested the irregularities and vices to which a military life would expose him: on the other, he dreaded the condemnation he might incur by acquitting himself unfaithfully in the pastoral office. He conceived it abundantly easier to toil for glory in fields of blood, than to labor for God, with unwearied perseverance, in the vineyard of the church. He believed himself qualified rather for military operations, than for spiritual employments. On the whole, after fully debating the matter in his own mind, the exalted ideas he entertained
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of the holy ministry determined to seek some other profession, more adapted to the weakness of humanity.

Soon after his disappointments with respect to the army, his inclination led him to visit this island, where he afterwards found that *sovereign good*, which he had been vainly pursuing from place to place. During the early part of his residence in England, it is not known, that he entertained any thought of entering into holy orders, though he diligently prosecuted those studies, which are generally regarded as preparatory to such a step. It is most probable, that he had formed no design of this nature, till about the second year of his continuance at Tern Hall, in Shropshire, when he became acquainted with the power of true religion, and experienced that important change of heart, which is described in the second note. Receiving at that time an inestimable talent from the hand of God, he resolved, like a wise and faithful servant, to neglect nothing, that might conduce to the due improvement of it: and, from that period, it became his grand enquiry, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits, that he hath done unto me?* No service appeared too laborious to be undertaken, nor any sacrifice too valuable to be offered, in return for the signal favors conferred upon him. But what service could he render, or what sacrifice could he offer, that might be acceptable to the God, who had done so great things for him? The holy ministry, indeed, appeared to open before him a passage to the most important labors; and an entire consecration of his united powers

to this momentous work, he considered as the richest oblation he could make to the Father of mercies. But a variety of fears, respecting his own unworthiness, prevented him from immediately offering this sacrifice, or hastily entering upon this work. He trembled at the idea of running before he was sent; and dreaded engaging in a warfare at his own cost. He believed himself unfurnished for the duties of the office, to which he aspired. And though he considered the inclination of his heart as an internal call to the service of the church, yet he judged it necessary to tarry till that call should be confirmed, if not by some providential opening, at least by the approbation of his christian friends. The latter kind of confirmation was readily obtained. A discovery of his sentiments was no sooner made, but many honorable elders in the household of God, who had discernment enough to distinguish the grace, that was in him, and how admirably he was fitted for the work of an evangelist, rejoiced over him as a faithful laborer already hired into the vineyard of Christ. They not only ratified his internal call to the holy ministry by their unanimous approbation, but earnestly solicited him to obey that call without any further delay. Mean while, the word of the Lord was as a fire in his bones, ever struggling for vent, and not unfrequently breaking forth, as occasion offered, in public reproof, exhortation, and prayer.

In this state he continued for about the space of two years, not wholly determined what course he should pursue, but patiently waiting to hear, what the

the LORD GOD would say concerning him. And during this season he was much occupied in making a diligent preparation for the service of the altar, that if ever he should be called to so honorable an employment, he might go forth thoroughly furnished to every good work. The chief objects of his pursuit were *sacred knowledge* and *christian purity*, in both of which he made an uncommon proficiency, surpassing many, who had studied for that knowledge, and struggled for that purity, through the greater part of their life. By his private exercises he was fitted for public labors, and by the holy discipline, to which he submitted himself without any reserve, he was trained to spiritual eminence in the school of Christ. To those who perfectly knew him in this state of retirement, he appeared as a *polished shaft*, hid indeed for a season in the quiver of his Lord, yet ready for immediate service, and prepared to fly in any appointed direction.

He was not without promises of preferment in the church: but these served rather to retard, than to hasten, his entrance into it. Having a sacrifice to perform, and not a fortune to secure, he was fearful lest his intention should be debased by views of an interested nature. At length, his humble reluctance was overcome, and after the most mature deliberation, he solemnly determined to offer himself a candidate for holy orders. And to this solemn determination he was urged by the encreasing force of two powerful motives, *gratitude* and *benevolence*: *gratitude* to GOD impelled him

to declare the name of his great benefactor, and bear public testimony to the word of his grace; while *benevolence* toward his fellow men incited him to *spend and be spent* in promoting their best interests. Constrained by these rare and sacred motives he publicly dedicated himself to the work of the holy ministry in the year 1757, when he received deacon's orders, on Sunday March the sixth, from the hands of the bishop of Hereford, and priest's on the following Sunday from the hands of the bishop of Bangor, in the chapel royal at St. James's.

TRAIT V.

HIS ENTIRE DEVOTION TO JESUS CHRIST.

THE true christian, called to become a disciple of the blessed Jesus, rather than refuse the offered privilege, renounces his all. If this token of devotion to Christ is discernible in the character of every true christian, it is still more conspicuous in the character of every true minister. Such a person, inwardly called by the grace of God to a state of discipleship with Christ, and outwardly consecrated to such a state by the imposition of hands, gives himself unreservedly up to the service of his condescending master. He withstands no longer that permanent command
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of our exalted Lord, to which his first disciples shewed so cheerful a submission, *Follow me*. Nor is he discouraged, while Christ continues, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me* (a). No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God (b). He, that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life, for my sake, shall find it (c). If there be found any pastor, who cannot adopt the solemn appeal of the first ministers of Christ, *Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee* (d), that man is in no situation to copy the example of his forerunners in the christian church, and is altogether unworthy the character he bears: since without this detachment from the world, and this devotion to the Son of God, he flatters himself in vain, that he is either a true minister, or a real member, of Jesus Christ.

Observe the declaration of one, whose attachment to his divine master deserves to be had in everlasting remembrance: *Those things which were gain to me I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win*

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(a) Matt. xvi, 24. (b) Luke ix. 62. (c) Matt. x. 37—39.

(d) Luke xviii. 28.

win Christ, and be found in him, having the righteousness which is of God by faith (e). For none of us, true christians or true ministers, liveth to himself, or dieth to himself: but whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord (f).

Professing to be, either a minister, or a believer, of the Gospel, without this entire devotion to Jesus Christ, is to live in a state of the most dangerous hypocrisy: it is neither more nor less, than saying, Lord! Lord! without having a firm resolution to do, what our gracious master has commanded.

NOTE V.

DEVOTION to Christ, though it be strictly enjoined by the church, yet is rarely discernible in the conduct of her members. As the majority of Christians are satisfied with a superficial knowledge of the Redeemer, so their devotion to him is purely of a professional nature. Their attachment to Christ may dispose them to some few external marks of respect towards Him, but is insufficient to produce in them any single act of genuine obedience, or self-denial. They reverence his name, while they reject his authority; and acknowledge Him as a Saviour, while they refuse to follow him as a guide. In all these respects it was totally otherwise with the man, whose character is here faintly delineated. His devotion to Christ was sincere and unreserved,

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(e) Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9. (f) Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

first as a private christian, and afterwards as a minister of the Gospel. As a private christian, he was a strict and constant follower of the blessed Jesus, renouncing for his sake all the transient gratifications of time and sense. Whatever he had formerly admired and pursued, he voluntarily laid at the feet of his Lord. Those requisitions of Christ which are generally looked upon as strict in the extreme, he submitted to without a murmur; cutting off the *right hand*, plucking out the *right eye*, and casting away whatever might prove offensive to his spotless master, with all the determination of a deep-rooted attachment. He cast aside every weight, he resisted every sin, and neglected nothing, that might prove either the sincerity of his zeal, or the fervor of his love. He dedicated his time, his studies, his acquisitions, and his substance, to the service of his Lord; and desired to present him, at once, with his whole being, as a living sacrifice expressive of his entire devotion. As a minister of the Gospel, his devotion to Christ was expressed, if possible, in a still more absolute manner. He entered more universally into his service, and manifested a greater degree of zeal for the honor of his name. He imitated his perfections in a more unlimited sense, and interested himself more deeply in the extension of his kingdom upon earth. His renunciation of the world became more complete, and his self-denial more strict. He acted with greater resolution, and suffered with greater firmness in the cause of christianity. His devotion to Christ was now carried to a higher pitch, than most christians.

tians are willing to believe attainable in the present life. He had no interest to serve, no inclination to gratify, nor any connection to maintain, but such as flowed from his union with the holy Jesus. Wherever he came, he breathed the spirit of devotion, and wherever he was familiarly known, the purity, the fervor, the resolution, and the constancy of that devotion, were universally apparent. He daily felt and acted in conformity to the powerful obligations, by which he was bound to the Captain of his salvation. His vows of inviolable affection and fidelity, were solemnly renewed, as occasion offered, both in public and in private: and it was wonderful to observe, through all the vicissitudes of his christian warfare, how perfect a harmony was maintained between his inclinations and his engagements, his habits and his profession. It would be very easy, to expatiate largely under this head, though very difficult to give a description, in any tolerable degree, adequate to the subject. Instead of presenting the reader with several pages upon the point now before us, it shall suffice to say, that this venerable man's *entire devotion* to Jesus Christ, as a minister of the Gospel, was variously expressed in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report.

T R A I T

T R A I T VI.

HIS STRENGTH AND HIS ARMS.

THE ministers of the present age are furnished in a manner suitable to their design. As they are more desirous to please than to convert their hearers, so they are peculiarly anxious to embellish the inventions of a seducing imagination. They are continually seeking after the beauty of metaphors, the brilliancy of antitheses, the delicacy of description, the just arrangement of words, the aptness of gesture, the modulations of voice, and every other studied ornament of artificial eloquence. While the true minister, effectually convinced of the excellence of the Gospel, relies alone, for the effect of his public ministry, upon the force of truth, and the assistance of his divine master.

Observe the manner in which St. Paul expresses himself upon this subject; *We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak (a). And I, brethren, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I des-*

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terminated

(a) 2 Cor. iv. 13.

terminated not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (b). For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (c).

The true minister, following the example of St. Paul, after having experienced the power of these victorious arms, exhorts every soldier of Christ to provide himself with the same spiritual weapons: Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand. For we wrestle not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace: above all,

(b) 1 Cor. ii. 1-5, (c) 2 Cor. x. 4, 5,

all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And, that you may perform heroical service with these arms, pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit (d).

So long as the faithful minister, or servant, of Christ wears and wields these scriptural arms, he will be truly invincible. But no man can gird himself with these invisible weapons, except he be born of the Spirit; nor can any christian foldier employ them to good purpose, unless he be first endued with all that divine power, which flows from the love of God and man: he must feel, at least, some sparks of that fire of charity, which warmed the bosom of St. Paul, when he cried out—*Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ and of souls constraineth us* (e).

“From the time, that the eyes of St. Paul were opened to a perception of the Gospel,” says Monf. Romilly, pastor of a church in Geneva, “we find him no longer the same person. He is another man, he is a new creature, who thinks no more but on Gospel truths, who hears nothing, who breathes nothing but the Gospel; who speaks on no other subject, who attends

(d) Eph. vi. 10—18. (e) 2 Cor. v. 13, 14.

" attends to no other thing but the voice of the
 " Gospel; who desires all the world to attend
 " with him to the same voice, and wishes to
 " communicate his transports to all mankind.
 " From this happy period, neither the preju-
 " dices of flesh and blood, neither respect to
 " man, nor the fear of death, nor any other
 " consideration is able to withstand him in his
 " course. He moves on with serenity in a path
 " sown thick with reproaches and pain. What
 " has he to fear? He despises the maxims of
 " the world, nay the world itself; its hatred
 " as well as its favor, its joys as well as its sor-
 " rows, its meanness as well as its pomp. Time
 " is no longer an object with him, nor is his
 " economy regulated by it. He is superior to
 " every thing; he is *immortal*. Though the
 " universe arms itself against him, though hell
 " opens its abysses, though affliction assaults
 " him on every side, he stands immoveable in
 " every storm, looking with contempt upon
 " death, conscious that he can never die. Su-
 " perior to all his enemies, he resists their united
 " attempts with the arms of the Gospel, op-
 " posing to time and hell, eternity and heaven."

N O T E. VI.

H B, who engages himself to fight the battles of
 the Lord, has need of uncommon strength and ir-
 resistible

resistible arms; and if he be destitute of the one or the other, he vainly expects to stand in the evil day. The christian warrior is exposed to a vast variety of dangers, and beset with innumerable enemies. His whole life is one continued scene of warfare, in which he wrestles sometimes with visible, and at other times with invisible adversaries. For the labors of this sacred warfare no man ever esteemed himself less sufficient than M. de la Flèche. He ever considered himself as the weakest of Christ's adherents, and unworthy to follow his glorious standard. But while he boasted no inherent strength, and was ready to occupy the meanest post, he was regarded by his brethren, as a man peculiarly *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. United to Christ, as the branch is united to the vine, he was constantly deriving abundant supplies of vigor from the fountain-head of power. And as the source of his strength was inexhaustible, so its operations were various and incessant. Now it was engaged in subduing sin; and now, in laboring after that holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord*: there it inspired the courage of the mighty, and here it sustained the burdens of the weak: at one time, it was discovered by resolution and zeal; at another, by resignation and fortitude; by the former, this man of God was enabled to grapple with his strongest enemy; by the latter, he was taught to *endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*. His arms were equal to his strength, and served to make him truly invincible in the cause of godliness. From his first admission into the true

true church militant, he was fully persuaded, that armour forged by the art of man must needs be insufficient, either for conquest or security, in a spiritual warfare. He saw it absolutely necessary to be furnished with weapons of celestial temper, and was altogether dissatisfied with his state, till he had put on *the whole armour of God*. He now appeared in the compleat christian uniform, with a determined resolution never to put it off till his last conflict should be decided. From the helmet of salvation to the sandals of peace, all was entire, and perfectly fitted to his spiritual frame. No mortal part was left unguarded, nor was any joint of his harness so loose, as to admit a thrust from the enemy. No part of his sacred panoply appeared uncouth or cumbersome, no part of his carriage constrained or unnatural: he appeared in arms, as in his proper dress, and not as David, when he assayed to go forth in the armour of Saul. On no occasion was he ever known to affect any thing like spiritual pomp; yet, on every occasion, there was a dignity of character in his deportment that raised the veneration of every beholder. As the heroes of antiquity were distinguished from warriors of an inferior order by the splendor of their arms, so by the uncommon lustre of his graces, he was distinguished as a chieftain in the christian bands. Nor was he remarkable merely for the worth and beauty of his arms, but principally for the important conquests he obtained by them over error and impiety. Not to mention here the success of his internal conflicts with sin and self, which have been already alluded to, there are
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not wanting at this day, in the parish and vicinity of Madeley, many indisputable proofs, that *the weapons of his warfare were mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds.* He attacked sin, in public and in private, under all its wonderful variety of appearances; and never quitted the charge till he had either subdued, or put it to shame. Unawed either by numbers, or by power, he was superior to all the opposition, that could be raised against him: and it may be confidently asserted, that *no man was able to stand before him, all the days of his life.* That he had enemies, who were never subdued, will readily be granted: but that any of those enemies were hardy enough openly to encounter him, is absolutely denied. The despisers of religion considered him as a man of an undaunted spirit in the cause of God; and the most daring among them, at the whisper of his approach, would seek the nearest shelter to screen themselves from his deserved rebuke.

The weapon, by which he was enabled to perform the most memorable of his public services, was that sacred word, which is emphatically called, *The sword of the Spirit.* In the exercise of this two-edged instrument he was expert beyond description, turning it every way for the defence of the Gospel, and the overthrow of its opposers. With this he cut in pieces all the snares of the wicked, and with this he struck at the deepest root of sin. With this he divided asunder, *soul and spirit, joints and marrow:* and wherever he aimed the determined blow, it was impossible for all the address of the sinner,

inner, effectually to ward it off. Upon this he chiefly depended for the success of his ministry, as the only weapon, by which he could ever hope to penetrate through the prejudices of his people, and subdue their aversion to the *glorious Gospel*. While others are anxious to charm their hearers with "the studied ornaments of artificial eloquence," his first care was, in simplicity and godly sincerity, to declare the truth, as it is in Jesus. Had he aimed at celebrity as a public speaker, furnished as he was with all the united powers of learning, genius, and taste, he might have succeeded beyond many, who are engaged in so insignificant a pursuit. But his design was to *convert*, and not to *captive* his hearers; to secure their eternal interests, and not to obtain their momentary applause. Hence his *speech and his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*. He spake, as in the presence of God, and taught, as one having divine authority. There was an energy in his preaching, that was irresistible. His subjects, his language, his gestures, the tone of his voice, and the turn of his countenance, all conspired to fix the attention and affect the heart. Without aiming at sublimity he was truly sublime, and uncommonly eloquent without affecting the orator. He was wondrously skilled in adapting himself to the different capacities and conditions of his hearers. He could stoop to the illiterate, and rise with the learned; he had incontrovertible arguments for the sceptic, and powerful persuasives for the listless believer; he had sharp remonstrance for the obstinate,

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and strong consolation for the mourner: and like a scribe thoroughly instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, he brought forth out of his treasures *things new and old*, as occasion required. To hear him without admiration was impossible; without profit, improbable. The unthinking went from his presence under the influence of serious impressions, and the obdurate with kindled relentings. Many an unsuspecting trifier has he enclosed in the Gospel net, and many a happy captive has he led, in the course of his public ministry, *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God*. I shall here transcribe a short passage from a letter addressed to the translator of these volumes, by one of the author's esteemed friends. "I would rather have "heard," says the writer, "one sermon from "M. de la Fléchère, *viva voce*, than read a volume "of his works. His words were clothed with "power, and entered with effect. His writings "are arrayed in all the garb of human literature. "But his living word soared an eagle's flight above "humanity. He basked in the sun, carried his "young ones on his wings, and seized the prey for "his master. In short, his preaching was *apostolic*; "while his writings, though enlightened, are but "*human*."

That he was a successful preacher of the Gospel, in his own, as well as in this country, the following little relation may serve as a sufficient proof. On his first visit to Switzerland, after entering into holy orders, he was waited upon by the clergy of Nyon, who severally pressed him to honor
their

their pulpits during his stay at that place. On the morrow of his arrival, being the sabbath day, he addressed his countrymen in an admirable discourse, the result of much prayer and meditation. The subject matter of this sermon, and the manner in which it was delivered, were equally striking. The clearness and pathos, with which he expressed himself upon this occasion, attracted the attention of all, and filled many with a serious concern for *the faith once delivered to the saints*. Deists themselves listened with admiration; while the multitude appeared, as though they saw and heard something more than man. To adopt the French idea, he carried off the whole audience. During his continuance at Nyon he preached in different churches, and wherever he was announced, multitudes flocked from all quarters to attend him. The reputation of his great abilities drew together persons of every description; and it was truly refreshing, says an intimate friend of M. de la Fléchère who was present upon these occasions, to behold the powerful effects of the Gospel among those, who before that time, had seldom or ever heard it proclaimed in its purity. Many despisers of revelation were overawed and confounded; many formal professors were touched with the power of true religion, and many careless lovers of pleasure were impressed with a solemn sense of eternal things. One young man, in particular, was so deeply affected by the discourses of this powerful preacher, that he immediately resolved to consecrate himself to the service of God, in the work of the holy ministry. Accordingly he betook himself from
that

that time to studies of a sacred nature, and is at this day minister of the protestant church at Lyons. Among others, a good old minister, who was more than seventy years of age, heard him gladly; and earnestly intreated him to lengthen out his visit at Nyon, though it should be but for a single week beyond the time proposed for his departure. He urged his request with much importunity: and when he found, that his desire could not conveniently be complied with, the old man wept, and turning to M. de la Fléchère's fellow-traveller, affectingly exclaimed, "O Sir, how unfortunate for this country; during my day it has produced but one angel of a man, and it is our lot to be deprived of him!" The benefit of his public labors in this place was significantly attested, by the numerous applications, he received in private for religious instruction. And the grateful sense his countrymen entertained of those labors was fully expressed, in their affectionate concern, at his departure from among them. Weeping multitudes crowded round his carriage, anxious to receive a last word or look: and not a few followed his chariot wheels above two miles from the town, before they had resolution to tear themselves entirely away from the company of this venerable man.

For Nyon to be deprived of the ministry of this illustrious divine was truly unfortunate: but it was equally happy for that favored village, which was appointed to be the scene of his exemplary labors. There his *strength* and his *arms* were chiefly exercised, and there his most important victories over sin
were

were obtained. There his name will long continue to be had in honor: and from thence, many a goodly jewel will be collected to form for him a crown of rejoicing, in the day of the Lord.

TRAIT VII.

HIS POWER TO BIND, TO LOOSE, AND TO BLESS, IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

THE armour of God, described in the preceding article, is common to all christians: but the true minister is girded with weapons of a peculiar temper. As a christian, his sword is the *word of God* in general; but, as a minister, it is *especially* those parts of the Gospel, by which he is invested with authority to preach the *word of God*, and to perform the functions of an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Go, said our blessed Master to his first disciples, *and preach the Gospel to every creature. He, that believeth my doctrine shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be damned (a). All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway,*
even

(a) Mark xvi. 15, 16.

even unto the end of the world (b). *Verily, verily I say unto you, he, that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me; and he, that receiveth me, receiveth Him that sent me* (c). *Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, according to the spirit of my Gospel, shall be loosed in Heaven* (d).

Behold, from whence the ministers of Christ have authority to absolve true penitents, and to excommunicate obstinate sinners. An authority, which some have called *the power of the clergy*; a power, which unrighteous pastors so much abuse, and which the faithful never presume to exercise, but with the utmost solemnity: a power, which, nevertheless, belongs to them of divine right, and which can be denied them with no more reason, than *they* can refuse the sacramental cup to the people. Such, at least, is the judgment of many excellent and learned divines, among whom may be reckoned Mons. Ostervald, and Mons. Roques. It may however be enquired, with propriety, in this place — Can ecclesiastics be justified in still making use of their authority in these respects, unless they do it with prudence and impartiality? And would it not become them to exercise the ecclesiastic discipline, in an especial manner, upon unworthy pastors, following the maxim of St. Peter; *The time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God* (e)?

Invested

(b) Matt. xxviii. 18—20. (c) John xiii. 20. (d) Matt. xviii 18.

(e) 1 Pet. iv. 17.

Invested with the authority, which Christ has conferred upon him, the true minister is prepared to denounce the just judgments of God against obstinate sinners, to console the dejected, and to proclaim the promises of the Gospel to every sincere believer, with an energy unknown to the worldly pastor, and with a power, which is accompanied by the seal of the living God. Thus, when such a minister clearly discerns the profound malice of another Elymas, he is permitted to say, with the authority of an ambassador of Jesus Christ; *O full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the Devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Behold! the hand of the Lord shall be upon thee* (f). But the true minister is careful never to abuse this awful power. *We can do nothing, says St. Paul, against the truth, but for the truth: I write these things being absent, lest being present, I should use sharpness, according to the power, which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction* (g). The denunciation of vengeance is to the minister of Christ, what the execution of judgment is to the God of love, his painful and *strange work*.

The good pastor, conscious that the ministration of mercy exceeds in glory the ministration of condemnation, places his chief glory and pleasure in spreading abroad the blessings of the new covenant. He knows, that the promises are *yea, and amen*,
in

(f) Acts xiii. 10, 11. (g) 2 Cor. xiii. 8, 10.

in that beneficent Redeemer, who gave the following charge to his first missionaries: *Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: if not, it shall turn to you again* (h).

The wishes and prayers of a minister, who acts and speaks in conformity to the intent of this benign charge, really communicate the peace and benediction of his gracious master to those, who are meet for their reception: and according to the degree of his faith, he can write to the faithful of distant churches, with the confidence of St. Paul

—*I am persuaded that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ* (i).

Whenever he salutes his brethren, his pen or his lips become the channel of those evangelical wishes, which flow from his heart:

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ (k). *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all* (l).

Thus the true minister approves himself a member of the royal priesthood, a priest of the most High, after the order of Melchisedec, who blessed the Patriarch Abraham: or rather, a ministering servant of the son of God, who was manifested in the flesh, that in him all the families of the earth might be blessed.

Vol. I.

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Great

(h) Luke x. 5, 6. (i) Rom. xv. 29. (k) Phil. i. 2.

(l) 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

Great God ! grant that the whole company of christian pastors may be men after thine own heart. Leaving to the ignorant those compliments, which a slavish dependance has invented, may thy ministers perpetually carry about them the love, the gravity, and the apostolic authority, which belong to their sacred character. May all the benedictions, which thou hast commissioned them to pronounce, cause them still to be received, in every place, *as angels of God* (m). Far from being despised as hypocrites, shunned as troublesome guests, or feared as men of a covetous and tyrannical disposition, may that moment always be esteemed a happy one, in which they enter any man's habitation : and whenever they make their appearance upon these charitable occasions, may those, who compose the family, each seeking to give the first salute, cry out, — *How beautiful are the feet of them, that preach the Gospel of peace* (n) !

The power of pronouncing *exhortations* and *blessings* is not the exclusive privilege of pastors, but belongs to all experienced believers. The Patriarchs had a right to bless their children ; and Jacob blessed not only his sons and grandsons, but also the king of Egypt himself. If the followers of Christ, then, are deprived of this consolatory power, the children of ancient Israel were more highly privileged than the members of the christian church, who are called, nevertheless, to receive

(m) Gal. iv. 14. (n) Rom. x. 15.

receive more precious benedictions, and to be, as our Lord expresses it, *the salt of the earth, and the light of the world*. When St. Paul writes to believers: *Desire spiritual gifts; but rather that ye may prophesy: for he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, to exhortation, and comfort (o)*: he doubtless excites them to ask of God that overflowing charity, and that patriarchal authority, without which, it is impossible for them fully to comply with the following apostolic injunctions—*Bless, and curse not—knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing*—and, without a high degree of which, they cannot sincerely obey those distinguished precepts of our blessed Lord—*Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them, which despitefully use you and persecute you (p)*.

NOTE VII.

M. de la Fléchère, like the good pastor above described, was accustomed to place his chief glory and pleasure in spreading abroad the benedictions of the Gospel. He considered the ministration of mercy as abundantly more glorious than the ministration of condemnation, and was disposed to magnify it as such upon all occasions. Experiencing in his own heart the inestimable effects of mercy, he was anxious, that all men should be partakers of his

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joy:

(o) 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 3. (p) Rom. xii. 14. 1 Pet. iii. 9. Matt. v. 44.

joy: and whenever he was engaged in pointing out the source of that mercy, its nature, its design, or the different degrees of its manifestation, he was then engaged in an employment peculiarly suited, both to his inclination, and his state. These were subjects, upon which he delighted to dwell, and upon which he had astonishing things to offer. His disposition to universal benevolence was conspicuous through the whole of his spiritual progress, but especially in the latter years of his life, when his heart was as a vessel running over with christian charity. As the holy ointment ran down from the head of Aaron to the *very skirts* of his clothing; so the charity of this exemplary pastor descended to, and embraced the very least and lowest of the human race. Wherever the smallest religious desire was expressed, he pronounced a blessing upon it; and wherever the weakest endeavor after spiritual attainments was discoverable, he encouraged it with his congratulations, and strengthened it with his prayers: nay, wherever impiety opposed him under its most malignant appearances, he met it with mingled commiseration and hope. Like a faithful imitator of the blessed Jesus, he came *preaching peace*, and breathing the most undissembled good-will to all around him. Like his beneficent master, he went about either doing, or seeking to do *good*, in every possible way: and wherever he came, he appeared like some superior being, whose sole employment was to benefit and bless the children of men. In those houses, where the sons and daughters of peace were found, he was welcomed as a messenger of
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the most joyful tidings, and honored as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. These happy families submitted with joy to his paternal authority, and considered his pastoral visits as an invaluable privilege. They looked upon their houses as consecrated by his prayers, and received his benedictions with reverence and gratitude.

That the prayers and benedictions of this venerable minister were of real importance, no reasonable doubt can be entertained; since the apostle James has expressly declared, that *the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. In how many instances his *fervent prayer* has proved *effectual* cannot possibly be determined on this side the grave: but there is one instance of a public nature, in which this has evidently appeared to be the case, and which, from the time of his decease, has excited the admiration and thankfulness of his surviving friends. The instance here alluded to is the unexpected continuance of a powerful, and well-directed ministry in the parish of Madeley. Upon the sudden removal of this great man from the labors of his station to the enjoyment of his reward, nothing was more improbable than that he should be succeeded in that station by a person qualified, in any degree, to tread in his steps. His people began to look forward with a melancholy apprehension, that the place, which had been so highly favored, with respect to religious culture, would shortly be deprived of its beauty, and, perhaps, be laid utterly waste. Their lamented pastor might have been succeeded by some person

devoted to interest, to indolence, or pleasure: and it was for some time more than probable that it would be so. But, by a concurrence of wonderful providences, a man was appointed to that important charge, whose unfeigned piety and ministerial abilities, marked him out as the only suitable successor to so eminent a servant of God. This was acknowledged at the time, by every attentive observer, to be the *Lord's doing*. And, at this day, while the inhabitants of Madeley behold the labors of the deceased carried on with fidelity and success, they recollect the ardent prayers he was accustomed to offer, and the confidence he sometimes expressed, that God would assuredly provide a supply for the spiritual wants of his people, whenever a period should be put to his public ministry among them.

While I bear testimony, in this note, to the patriarchal authority of M. de la Flèche, in pronouncing blessings upon his spiritual sons and daughters, I recollect, with thankfulness, that his benedictions and prayers will follow me through life. That those benedictions and prayers will open me a way to unexpected mercies, I presume not to say: but I trust they will never cease to act upon me, as a powerful stimulus, exciting me to walk worthy of that friendship and regard, with which I was so undeservedly honored by this holy man.

T R A I T

T R A I T V I I I .

THE EARNESTNESS WITH WHICH HE BEGAN, AND CONTINUED TO FILL UP THE DUTIES OF HIS VOCATION.

THE true penitent, having renounced himself for the honor of following his exalted Lord, stands faithfully in his own vocation, whether it be secular or ecclesiastic. He is prepared, upon all occasions, to perform the will of his gracious Master : and if he is commissioned to act as a minister of Christ, after furnishing himself with *the whole armour of God*, he will expose himself, without fear, to the most threatening dangers, that he may compel sinners to come in to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. *I rejoice, saith St. Paul, in my sufferings for the body of Christ, which is the church, whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God ; even the mystery, which hath been hid from ages, but which is now made manifest to his saints : to whom God would make known, what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles ; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory : whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may pre-*

sent every man perfect in Christ Jesus ; whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for all those among whom the word of God is preached, that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (a).

Such are the great ideas, which the Apostle Paul entertained of the ministry he had received : and observe the assiduity, with which he discharged the duties of so important an office. — He know, says he, speaking to the pastors, to whom he committed the care of one of his flocks, from the first day, that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations ; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the jews and also to the greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves ; for I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves, unfaithful pastors, enter in among you,

(a) Col. i. 24—29. ii. 1, 2, 3.

you, not sparing the flock. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears (b). In every place he discharged the obligations of a minister with the same application and zeal, travelling from city to city, and from church to church, bearing testimony to the redemption that is in Jesus, and declaring the great truths of the Gospel. When the synagogues were shut against him, he preached in the schools of philosophers, upon the sea-shore, on shipboard, and even in prisons: and while he dwelt a prisoner in his own house at Rome, he received all, that came in unto him, to whom he expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses and out of the Prophets, from morning till evening (c).

Thus the Son of God himself once publicly labored for the conversion of sinners, sometimes going through all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel (d); and at other times instructing the multitudes, who either followed him into the fields, or resorted to the house, where he lodged: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat (e). And when through the pleasure of bringing the Samaritans acquainted with spiritual truth, he disregarded the necessities of nature, his disciples,

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requesting

(b) Acts xx. 18—31. (c) Acts xxviii. 23. (d) Matt. vi. 31.

(e) Mark, vi. 31, and (1)

requesting him to partake of the food they had prepared, received from him this memorable answer: *I have meat to eat, that ye know not of—my meat is to do the will of him, that sent me, and to finish his work, that is, to enlighten and save sinners* (f).

Thus St. Paul was diligently and daily occupied in fulfilling the duties of his apostolic vocation; and thus every minister of the Gospel is called to labor in his appointed sphere. It remains to be known, whether all, who do not labor, according to their ability, are not condemned by the following general rule; *if any will not work, neither should he eat* (g). For these words signify, applied to the present case, that they who will not labor as pastors, should by no means be permitted to eat the bread of pastors; an evangelical precept this, which deserves the strictest attention, as the bread of pastors is, in some sort, sacred bread, since it is that, which the piety of the public has set apart for the support of those, who have abandoned every worldly pursuit, that they might dedicate themselves freely and fully to the service of the church.

(c) And when through the pleasure of bringing the
lib of **NOTE VIII.**

IT was not immediately upon his entering into Holy orders, that M. de la Fléchère was appointed

(f) John iv. 31, 34. (g) 2 Thess. iii. 10.

statedly to labor in any particular place. As he still continued in the family of Mr. Hill, he was but occasionally called to exercise the ministry he had received. But, wherever he was invited to speak in the name of his master, he effectually distinguished himself from the generality of ministers, by the earnestness and zeal, with which he delivered his message. Whatever his hand found to do, in any part of the sacred vineyard, it may truly be said, that he did it with *all his might* : and there is much reason to believe, that even these occasional labors were not *in vain in the Lord*. It was about three years after his ordination, that he was presented to the living of Madeley, where he had officiated for some time, previous to this appointment. As Madeley was the place of his choice, so it was a place, to which by his rare endowments he was peculiarly adapted, and for the reformation of which he appears to have been eminently appointed by the providence of God. Celebrated for the extensive works carried on within its limits, Madeley was remarkable for little else than the ignorance and profaneness of its inhabitants, among whom respect to man was as rarely to be observed, as piety toward God. In this benighted place the sabbath was openly profaned, and the most holy things contemptuously trampled under foot ; even the restraints of decency were violently broken through, and the external form of religion held up as a subject of ridicule. This general description of the inhabitants of Madeley must not, however, be indiscriminately applied to every individual among

them: exceptions there were to this prevailing character, but they were comparatively few indeed. Such was the place, where M. de la Mèchère was called to stand forth, as a preacher of righteousness, and in which he appeared for the space of five and twenty years as a burning and shining light.

Immediately upon his settling in this populous village, he entered upon the duties of his vocation with an extraordinary degree of earnestness and zeal. He saw the difficulties of his situation, and the reproaches, to which he should be exposed, by a conscientious discharge of the pastoral office: but persuaded of the importance of his charge, and concerned for the welfare of his people, he set his face like a flint against the persecuting rage of his enemies. As a steward of the manifold grace of God, he faithfully dispensed the word of life according as every man had need; instructing the ignorant, reasoning with gainsayers, exhorting the immoral, and rebuking the obstinate. Instant in season and out of season, he diligently performed the work of an evangelist, and lost no opportunity of declaring the truths of the Gospel. Not content with discharging the stated duties of the sabbath, he counted every day as lost in which he was not actually employed in the service of the church. As often as a small congregation could be collected, which was usually every evening, he joyfully proclaimed to them the acceptable year of the Lord, whether it were in the place set apart for public worship, in a private house, or in the open air. And on these occasions, the affectionate and fervent manner in which

which he addressed his hearers, was an affecting proof of the interest he took in their spiritual concerns. As the varying circumstances of his people required, he assumed a different appearance among them: at one season, he would open his mouth in blessings; and, at another, he would appear, like his Lord amid the buyers and sellers, with the lash of righteous severity in his hand. But, in whatever way he exercised his ministry, it was evident, that his labors were influenced by love, and tended immediately, either to the extirpation of sin, or the increase of holiness. Nor was he less attentive to the private duties of his station, than to public exhortation and prayer. Like a vigilant pastor, he daily acquainted himself with the wants and dispositions of his people, anxiously watching over their several households, and diligently teaching them from family to family. Esteeming no man too mean, too ignorant, or too profane to merit his affectionate attention, he condescended to the lowest and most unworthy of his flock, cheerfully becoming the servant of all, that he *might gain the more*. In the performance of this part of his duty, he discovered an admirable mixture of discretion and zeal, solemnity and sweetness. He rebuked not an elder, but entreated him as a father; to younger men he addressed himself with the affection of a brother, and to children with the tenderness of a parent; witnessing both to small and great the redemption that is in Jesus, and persuading them to cast in their lot with the people of God. In some of these holy visits the earnest and constraining manner,

manner, in which he has pleaded the cause of piety, has melted down a whole family at once; the old and the young have mingled their tears together, and solemnly determined to return right humbly to their God. There were, indeed, several families within his populous parish, to which he had no access, whose members, loving darkness rather than light, agreed to deny him admission, lest their deeds should be reproved. In such cases, where his zeal for the salvation of individuals could not possibly be manifested by persuasion and entreaty, it was effectually discovered by supplication and prayer: nor did he ever pass the door of an opposing family, without breathing out an earnest desire, that the door of mercy might never be barred against their approaches. With respect to his attendance upon the sick, he was exemplary and indefatigable. Anxious upon every suitable occasion to treat with his parishioners on subjects of a sacred nature, he was peculiarly solicitous to confer with them, when verging toward the borders of eternity. At such seasons, when earthly objects lose their charms, and the mind is naturally disposed to look for support from some other quarter, he cheerfully came in to improve the providential visitation, either by salutary advice, or by seasonable consolation. These were valuable opportunities, which nothing could prevail upon him to neglect, fully convinced, that the dictates of truth are never more likely to make a due impression upon the heart, than when they are delivered in the anti-chamber of death. His treatment of the dying was always regulated by
their

their peculiar circumstances, and his fidelity toward them was sweetly tempered with compassion. If the departing soul was prepared for the promises of the Gospel, he thankfully administered them with a lavish hand: if otherwise, he was importunate in prayer, that the mercy of God might be magnified upon his languishing creature, though it should be as at the eleventh hour. As he never visited the chambers of the dying, but in the spirit of earnest supplication, so he seldom quitted them without some degree of consolatory hope. There is still another part of his duty in the discharge of which he discovered unusual earnestness and activity. It was a common thing in his parish, for young persons of both sexes, to meet at stated times, for the purpose of, what is called, recreation; and this recreation usually continued from evening to morning, consisting chiefly in dancing, revelling, drunkenness, and obscenity. These licentious assemblies, he considered as a disgrace to the christian name, and determined to exert his ministerial authority for their total suppression. He has frequently burst in upon these disorderly companies with a holy indignation, making war upon Satan in places peculiarly appropriated to his service. Nor was his labor altogether in vain among these children of dissipation and folly. After standing the first shock of their rudeness and brutality, his exhortations have been generally received with silent submission, and have frequently produced a partial, if not an entire reformation in many, who were accustomed to frequent these assemblies. With one of these persons
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I am perfectly acquainted, who, having treated this venerable pastor with ridicule and abuse, in one of these riotous assemblies, was shortly afterwards constrained to cast himself at his feet and solicit his prayers. This man is now steadily walking in the fear of God, with a thankful remembrance of the extraordinary manner, in which he was plucked as a brand from the burning.

These, and every other duty of his sacred vocation, among which I might have particularly noticed the public and private instruction of children, were performed by this apostolic minister with an earnestness and zeal, of which this note can convey but a very imperfect idea. Never weary of well-doing, he counted it his greatest privilege *to spend and be spent* in ministering to the church, which he constantly honored as the *body of Christ*, and in the service of which he sacrificed his strength, his health, and his life.

TRAIT IX.

THE MANNER IN WHICH HE DIVIDED HIS TIME BETWEEN PRAYER, PREACHING, AND THANKSGIVING.

THE minister of the present age is but seldom engaged in "publishing" to his people the truths of the Gospel; and still more rarely in sup-
plicating

plicating for them the possession of those blessings, which the Gospel proposes. It is chiefly before men, that he lifts up his hands, and affects to pour out a prayer from the fulness of his heart: while the true minister divides his time between the two important and refreshing occupations of preaching and prayer; by the former, making a public offer of divine grace to his hearers, and by the latter, soliciting for them in secret the experience of that grace. Such was the manner of the blessed Jesus himself, who after having reproved his disciples for the low degree of their faith, retired either into gardens, or upon mountains, praying that their faith might not fail. The good pastor, who constantly imitates the example of his divine master, is prepared to adopt the following language of St. Paul, in addressing the flock, upon which he is immediately appointed to attend: *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be filled with all the fulness of God (a). And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things, that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;*

(a) Eph. iii. 14—19.

Christ ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God (b). By prayers like these, the Apostle Paul was accustomed to water, without ceasing, the heavenly seed, which he had so widely scattered through the vineyard of his Lord, manifesting an encreasing attachment to those, among whom he had at any time published the tidings of salvation, and breathing out, in all his epistles to distant churches, the most earnest desire, that God would fulfil in them *all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power ; that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in them, and they in him (c).*

Pastors, who pray thus for their flocks, pray not in vain. Their fervent petitions are heard : sinners are converted, the faithful are edified, and thanksgiving is shortly joined to supplication. Thus the same apostle — *I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God, which is given you by Jesus Christ : that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge. So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (d).* Having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love unto all the saints, I cease not to give thanks for you (e).

Worldly

(b) Phil. i. 9—11. (c) 2 Theff. i. 11, 12. (d) 1 Cor. i. 4—7.

(e) Eph. i. 15, 16.

Worldly ministers have no experience of the holy joy, that accompanies these secret sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. But this can by no means be considered, as matter of astonishment. Is their attachment to Christ as sincere as that of his faithful ministers? Are they as solicitous for the salvation of their hearers? Do they teach and preach with equal zeal? Do they pray with the same ardor and perseverance?

NOTE IX.

IT is sufficiently evident, from what has been already advanced, that M. de la Fléchère, was far more abundant in his public labors than the greater part of his companions in the holy ministry. These public labors, however, astonishing as they were, bore but little proportion to those internal exercises of prayer and supplication, to which he was wholly given up in private. The former, of necessity, were frequently discontinued; but the latter were almost uninterruptedly maintained from hour to hour. He lived in the spirit of prayer; and whatever employments he was engaged in, this spirit was constantly manifested through them all. Without this he neither formed any design, nor entered upon any duty: without this, he neither read, nor conversed: without this, he neither visited nor received a visitant. Before I was of sufficient age to take holy orders, I thankfully embraced the offered privilege

privilege of spending a few months beneath the roof of this exemplary man, to whom I was at that time an entire stranger: and I well remember how solemn an impression was made upon my heart, by the manner in which he received me. He met me at his door with a look of inexpressible benignity; and conducting me by the hand into his house, intimated a desire of leading me immediately into the presence of that God, to whom the government of his little family was ultimately submitted. Instantly he fell upon his knees, and poured out an earnest prayer, that my present visit might be rendered both advantageous and comfortable, that the secret of the Lord might rest upon our common tabernacle, and that our society might be crowned by an intimate fellowship with that promised Emmanuel, in whom all the families of the earth are called to inherit a blessing. This may serve as a specimen of the manner, in which he was accustomed to receive his guests. In his social prayers he paid but little attention to those rules, which have been laid down, with respect to the composition and order of those devotional exercises. As the spirit gave him utterance, so he made his requests known unto God. But, while he prayed *with the Spirit*, he prayed *with the understanding also*. His words flowed spontaneously and without any premeditation, yet always wonderfully adapted to the occasion. Nothing impertinent, artificial, or superfluous appeared in his addresses to the Deity: and while he presented these addresses, there was a solemnity and animation in his manner, which tended not only to

edify,

edify, but to quicken and exalt the soul. There have been seasons of supplication, in which he appeared to be carried out, far beyond the ordinary limits of devotion: when like his Lord upon the mount, while he has continued to pour out his mighty prayer, *the fashion of his countenance has been changed*, and his face has appeared, as the face of an angel. None except those, who have frequently joined with him in this enlivening duty, can have any just conception of the manner, in which he performed it. They, who have enjoyed this privilege, have seen and felt, what is not to be described: and to others it can only be said, that his prayer was the prayer of faith, always fervent, often effectual, and invariably a mingled flow of supplication and gratitude, humility and confidence, resignation and fervor, adoration and love.

By the ardor of his social prayers, some judgment may be formed of his secret supplications: but of his frequent vehement struggles and unutterable breathings in these private exercises, He alone can judge, *who seeth in secret*. His deepest and most sensible communications with God were enjoyed in those hours, when the door of his closet was shut against human creatures, as well as human cares. And though he rejoiced to lift up his hands in company with his friends, yet when his heart was at any time peculiarly inflamed with desire, or pressed with affliction, he would say to his friends, as Christ to his disciples, *Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder*. His closet was the favorite retirement, to which he constantly retreated, whenever his public duties allowed

allowed him a season of leisure. Here he was privately hidden, as in the presence of God. Here he would either patiently wait for, or joyfully triumph in the loving-kindness of the Lord. Here he would plunge himself into the depths of humiliation; and from hence at other seasons, as from another Pisgah, he would take a large survey of the vast inheritance, which is reserved for the saints. Here he would ratify his solemn engagements to God: and here, like the good king Hezekiah, he would spread the various circumstances of his people, at the feet of their common Lord. In all cases of difficulty he would retire to this consecrated place, to ask counsel of the Most High; and here, in times of uncommon distress, he has continued during whole nights in prayer before God. At one period of his life, he was brought into such an intricate situation, that he was wholly at a loss to discover, what God required at his hand: and such was the difficulty before him, that the opinions of his most experienced friends could afford him but little light with respect to it. In this state, for three months successively, he spread the intricacies of his case before the Judge of all the earth, entreating, that he would direct the course of his conduct, by the order of his providence, and the influence of his Spirit. His request was continued till an answer was obtained, which was not till the wall of his chamber could exhibit a proof of his vehement intercession; that part of it, against which he was accustomed to kneel, appearing deeply stained with the breath he had spent in fervent supplication: such

was the ardor of his spirit, and such the devotion of his heart. The above circumstance was discovered by some about him, who were well acquainted with his manner in trying situations.

His preaching was perpetually preceded, accompanied, and succeeded by prayer. Before he entered upon the performance of this duty, he requested of the great Master of assemblies a subject adapted to the conditions of his people: earnestly soliciting for himself wisdom, utterance, and power; for them a serious frame, an unprejudiced mind, and a retentive heart. This necessary preparation, for the profitable performance of his ministerial duties, was of longer or shorter duration, according to his peculiar state at the time; and frequently he could form an accurate judgment of the effect, that would be produced in public, by the languor or enlargement he had experienced in private. The spirit of prayer accompanied him from the closet to the pulpit; and while he was outwardly employed in pressing the truth upon his hearers, he was inwardly engaged in pleading that last great promise of his unchangeable Lord, *I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

From the great congregation he again withdrew to his sacred retreat, there requesting in secret, that a blessing might accompany his public labors, and that the seed, which he had sown, being treasured up in honest and good hearts, might sooner or later become abundantly fruitful.

While it is here recorded, that this faithful servant of God was accustomed to *pray without ceasing,*
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it must be noted at the same time, as a distinguishing part of his character, that *in every thing he gave thanks*. His heart was always in a grateful frame, and it was his chief delight to *honor God by offering him thanks and praise*. Frequently when he has been engaged in recounting the gracious dealings of God with respect to himself, or his signal favors conferred upon the church, he has broke out in a strain of holy rejoicing, *Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders, that he doeth for the children of men!* He considered every unexpected turn of providence, as a manifestation of his Father's good pleasure, and discerned causes of thanksgiving, either obvious or latent, in every occurrence. Thus, either in the expectation, or in the possession, of promised mercies, he *rejoiced evermore*. The immediate causes of his joy were manifold, public and private, spiritual and temporal; but they all were swallowed up in the advancement of Christ's kingdom upon earth. This he considered, as a subject of universal rejoicing; and for this, he more especially desired to *praise the name of God with a song, and to magnify it with thanksgiving*.

As he has justly expressed it in the trait above —
 “ Pastors, who pray for their flocks, pray not in
 “ vain. Their fervent petitions are heard; sinners
 “ are converted, the faithful are edified, and
 “ thanksgiving is shortly joined to supplication.”
 With respect to himself it was abundantly so. The seed, which he had watered with his tears, and followed with his prayers, produced at length a plentiful

plentiful harvest. His ministry was attended with unusual success, and a considerable body of his people saluted each other as brethren in Christ. His exultation over these, in their regenerate estate, was equal to his former solicitude on their account: and as often as an occasion has presented itself of leading a penitent prodigal into the household of God, his carriage has been marked by every possible demonstration of joy. Leading the returning wanderer into his spiritual family, he would cry out, with a countenance full of holy triumph, If there be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner, that repenteth, then it is meet, that we should rejoice and be glad together this day; *for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.* His joy was continually receiving some accession of this kind. From year to year, sinners were converted from the error of their ways, and believers were built up in their most holy faith: while he appeared among them as a happy father, rejoicing in their prosperity, and blessed in the blessings of his spiritual children. Such were the different states of earnest prayer, and joyful praise, with which this evangelical preacher was deeply acquainted, and which mutually preceded and succeeded each other in his Christian experience.

T R A I T X.

THE FIDELITY, WITH WHICH HE ANNOUNCED THE SEVERE THREATENINGS, AND CONSOLATORY PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL.

THE worldly minister has neither the courage, nor the tenderness of the true pastor. He is fearful of publishing those truths, which are calculated to alarm the careless sinner; and he knows not, in what manner to apply the promises of the Gospel, for the relief of those, who mourn. If ever he attempts to descant upon the consolatory truths of the Gospel, he only labors to explain, what is nearly unintelligible to himself; and all his discourses on subjects of this nature are void of that earnest persuasion, and that unction of love, which characterize the ministers of Christ. On the other hand, his dread of giving offence will not suffer him to address sinners of every rank, with the holy boldness of the Prophet Samuel: *If ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you. If ye still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed* (a).

The faithful pastor, on
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(a) 1 Sam. xii. 15, 25.

the contrary, conscious that the harshest truths of the Gospel are as necessary, as they are offensive, courageously insists upon them, in the manner of St. Paul — *Thinkest thou, O man, that doest such things, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Know this, that after thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: for indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man, that doeth evil (b). If every transgression under the first covenant received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them, that heard him (c). This ye know, that no unclean person, nor covetous man hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God: let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience (d). See that ye refuse not him, that speaketh: for if they escaped not, who refused him, that spake on earth, viz. the prophet Moses; much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him, that speaketh from Heaven, viz. the Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore let us serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire (e).*

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(b) Rom. ii. 3, 5, 9. (c) Heb. ii. 2, 3. (d) Eph. v. 5, 6.
(e) Heb. xii. 25-29.

But though the true minister courageously announces the most severe declarations of the word to the unbelieving and the impenitent; yet he is never so truly happy, as when he invites the poor in spirit to draw forth the riches of grace from the treasury of God's everlasting love. *God hath not, saith St. Paul, appointed us to wrath; but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ (f). This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (g). Ye are not come unto the mount, that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith (h). If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. He, that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he, that condemneth?*

(f) 1 Thess. v. 9. (g) 1 Tim. i. 15. (h) Heb. xii. 18, 24.
x. 19, 22.

demneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (i).

When these exhilarating declarations are found insufficient to revive the hearts of the contrite, the evangelical preacher fails not to multiply them, in the most sympathizing and affectionate manner. *I say unto you, continues he, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin (k). And by him all, who believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses (l). There is therefore now no condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus (m): for where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (n).*

Such are the cordials, which the faithful evangelist administers to those, who are weary and heavy laden: precious cordials, which the worldly pastor can never effectually apply; which he either employs out of season, or renders useless by such additions of his own, as are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.

NOTE X.

RIGHTLY to divide the word of truth is a work of no little importance, in the church of
F 3 God.

(i) Rom. v. 10. viii. 32, 34. (k) Matt. xii. 31. & John i. 7.

(l) Acts xiii. 39. (m) Rom. viii. 1. (n) Rom. v. 20.

GOD. Here fidelity and skill are equally necessary, and if either be wanting, the work will be incomplete. With respect to the latter, either as it regards the word of God, or as it relates to the human heart, M. de la Fléchère was abundantly qualified for the discharge of his ministerial duties. As to the human heart, he had so long and so accurately investigated his own, that he was not easily deceived in forming a judgment of his neighbour's. He knew its depths as well as its shallows, and its subtil artifices as well as its natural tempers: he explored its intricate mazes, and unlocked its secret recesses with wonderful ease, and could generally discover its real situation through all its assumed disguises. With regard to the word of God, he had studied it with so much constancy and care, that he was perfectly familiar with every part of it. He was deeply read in the spiritual sense of the word, and had a happy talent at reconciling its apparent contradictions. He could select from it, with the utmost readiness, truths of every different tendency; and knew how to apply them, not only in common cases, but in the most extraordinary exigencies of God's people. His fidelity, in addressing the different classes of his hearers, was correspondent to that spirit of discernment and wisdom, with which he was so eminently favored. On the one hand, he never attempted *slightly to heal* the hurt of his people: and, on the other, he was solicitous never to *make sad the heart of the righteous*, whom God had not made sad. Wherever he discovered impiety in the conduct, or hypocrisy in the heart,

heart, he immediately levelled against it the keenest arrows of conviction. He warned the wicked of his way, and frequently endeavoured to draw him from it by alarming his heart with salutary fears; selecting and applying upon these occasions those passages of holy writ, which are peculiarly *profitable for reproof and correction*. And whenever it became necessary, he marshalled against the careless sinner the most terrible denunciations of the Almighty's wrath. In the performance of this part of his duty, he paid but little regard to the outward circumstances of the offending party. Whether the enemies of God appeared in the splendor of riches, or in the meanness of poverty; whether they were distinguished by their erudition, or despicable by their ignorance, he met them with equal firmness in the cause of truth. The style of his reproofs was adapted, indeed, to the various capacities and habits of these different classes of men; but the substance of those reproofs was invariably the same to whatever class they were directed, neither sharpened by contempt, nor blunted by respect. Unawed either by the majesty of kings, or the madness of the people, he was equally fitted to appear with Moses at an impious court, or to stand with Stephen in a turbulent assembly. But though he was far from betraying any pusillanimity in applying the severe threatenings of the Gospel to the obstinately impenitent, yet his heart, in this awful employment, was never steeled against the feelings of humanity. His fidelity in this part of his duty was never unaccompanied with compassion and sor-

row. He possessed the firmness of Daniel, with all the benevolence of that favored prophet. Daniel was once directed to interpret and apply to Nebuchadnezzar a mysterious vision of divine vengeance, and the fidelity, with which he performed so painful a duty, is worthy of admiration. But while his interpretation was plain and his application pointed, it is observable, that they were preceded by evident regret, and followed by affectionate counsel. Such was the manner of M. de la Fléchère, who had learned, from a greater than Daniel, to pronounce a sentence of condemnation with anguish and tears. Luke xix. 41.

But while he was faithful, in proclaiming the *day of vengeance* to the disobedient, he neglected not to *proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*. Both these parts of his duty he performed with fidelity, but the latter only with alacrity and cheerfulness. Peculiarly to fit him for this evangelical service, *the Lord God had given him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him, that was weary*; and in the discharge of this favorite part of his office, he was equally skilful, tender and happy. His watchful eye was upon the weak, the faint, and the afflicted. He diligently acquainted himself with the nature and causes of their distress; and whether they fainted through the anguish of remorse, or groaned beneath the violence of temptation, he had a suitable cordial prepared for their relief. He placed before their eyes a rich display of God's everlasting love, and assisted them to ex-
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tract healing virtue from his unchangeable promises. He feelingly exhorted them to stretch out the withered hand; and till they were enabled actually to lay hold on the hope set before them, he ceased not to proclaim, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.* He was thoroughly acquainted with the treatment of afflicted consciences. He knew when to probe, and when to heal; when to depress, and when to encourage: and no man's case was so perplexed or desperate, but he was in some measure prepared to explain and relieve it. He discovered hope for the spiritual mourner amid the most hopeless circumstances, and furnished the tempted with a clew to guide them through the intricacies of their situation. As the psalmist addressed his own heart in distress, so he addressed himself to every son of affliction, in the day of his trouble. He reasoned over the particular case of the afflicted person—*Why art thou so full of heaviness, and why is thy soul so disquieted within thee? art thou afflicted beyond the common lot of thy companions in tribulation, or has any temptation befallen thee, except such as is common to man?* From reasoning he proceeded to encouragement—*Hope thou in God:* reflect upon his nature, depend upon his word, and ask of the generations that are past, who ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded? From encouragement he rose to assurance—*Thou shalt yet praise him,* notwithstanding the present unpromising appearances: the God of all consolation shall be thy

GOD, *the health of thy countenance, and thy portion for ever.*

He was ever anxiously desirous, that *the voice of joy and health* might be heard *in the dwellings of the righteous*; nor would he be contented, till he could prevail upon the sorrowful to bear some harmonious part in the work of adoration and thanksgiving. But it is impossible to give a just representation of the sweet and condescending manner, in which he treated every spiritual mourner. He would take up their neglected harps and tune them to the praises of unchangeable love. He would furnish them with a variety of sacred themes, and solicit them, at least, to attempt *one of the songs of Sion*. And while they lingered, he would sweetly take the lead in celebrating the divine goodness—Now he recorded mercies past, and now he recounted promised blessings; now he sung the wonders of grace, and now he pointed to the mysteries of glory. But if it appeared, after all these animating efforts on his part, that the mourners among his people were unable to accompany him in these joyful exercises, he would suddenly change his song of praise into a strain of supplication, and earnestly implore for them the light of His gracious countenance, whose prerogative it is to *appoint beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

Thus, with all possible plainness and fidelity, this animated preacher administered the good word of GOD, in his day and generation, whether it was a word of threatening to the careless and impenitent,

tent, or a word of consolation to the fearful and afflicted.

T R A I T X I.

HIS PROFOUND HUMILITY.

THERE is no evil disposition of the heart, with which the clergy are so frequently reproached, as *pride*. And it is with reason, that we oppose this sinful temper, especially when it appears in pastors, since it is so entirely contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, that the apostle Paul emphatically terms it, *The condemnation of the Devil* (a).

There is no amiable disposition, which our LORD more strongly recommended to his followers, than lowliness of mind. From his birth to his death, he gave himself a striking example of the most profound humility, joined to the most ardent charity. After having washed the feet of his first disciples, i. e. after he had taken the place of a slave at their feet, he addressed them as follows — *Know ye, what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master, and Lord: and ye say well: for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example,*

F 6.

that

(a) 1 Tim. iii. 6.

that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he, that is sent, greater than he that sent him (b). Again he says to the same effect — Ye know, that the princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they, that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister: and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister (c).

Real christianity is the school of humble charity, in which every true minister can say, with Christ, according to his growth in grace, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* And unhappy will it be for those, who, reversing christianity, say, by their example, which is more striking than all their discourses, *Learn of us to be fierce and revengeful, at the expense of peace both at home and abroad.* They, who receive the stipends of ministers, while they are thus endeavouring to subvert the religion, they profess to support, render themselves guilty, not only of hypocrisy, but of a species of sacrilege.

It is supposed, that St. Peter had the preeminence among the apostles, at least by his age: it is certain, that he spake in the name of the other apostles; that he first confessed Christ in two public orations; that our Lord conferred particular favors

(b) John xiii. 12—16.

(c) Mark x. 42—45.

favours upon him; that he was permitted to be one of the three witnesses of his Master's transfiguration and agony; and that, on the day of Pentecost, he proved the power of his apostolic commission, by introducing three thousand souls at once into the kingdom of Christ. Far, however, from arrogating, upon these accounts, a spiritual supremacy over his brethren, he assumed no other title but that, which was given in common to all his fellow laborers in the ministry; *The elders, which are among you, says he, I exhort, who am also an elder: Feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock* (d). A piece of advice this, which is too much neglected by those prelates, who distinguish themselves from their brethren, yet more by an antichristian pride, than by those ecclesiastical dignities, to which they have made their way by the intrigues of ambition.

All pastors should seek after humility with so much the greater concern, as some among them, seduced with the desire of distinguishing themselves as persons of eminence in the church, after making certain ecclesiastical laws contrary to the word of God, have become persecutors of those, who refused submission to their tyrannical authority. Observe here the injustice of some modern philosophers,

(d) 1 Peter v. 1, 3.

philosophers, who misrepresenting the christian religion, a religion which breathes nothing but humility and love, set it forth as the cause of all the divisions, persecutions, and massacres, which have ever been fomented or perpetrated by its corrupt professors. Disasters, which, far from being the produce of real christianity, have their principal source in the vices of a supercilious, uncharitable, and antichristian clergy.

The church will always be exposed to these imputations, till every ecclesiastic shall imitate St. Paul, as he imitated Christ. That apostle, ever anxious to tread in the steps of his divine Master, was peculiarly distinguished by his humility to God and man. Ever ready to confess his own native poverty, and to magnify the riches of grace, he cries out — *Who is sufficient for these things? who is properly qualified to discharge all the functions of the holy ministry? Such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit, giveth life (d). Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth:*
but

(d) 2 Cor. ii. 16. iii. 4, 6.

but God that giveth the increase (e). I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle: but by the grace of God I am what I am (f). God hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ: but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (g).

If the humility of St. Paul is strikingly evident in these remarkable passages, it is still more strongly expressed in those that follow. *Ye see, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things, which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things, that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence (h). Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, who am nothing, who am the chief of sinners, is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ (i).*

Reader, if thou hast that opinion of thyself, which is expressed in the foregoing passages, thou art an humble christian. Thou canst truly profess thyself the servant of all those who salute thee; thou art such already by thy charitable intentions, and art seeking occasions of demonstrating, by actual services, that thy tongue is the organ, not
of

(e) 1 Cor. iii. 5, 7. (f) 1 Cor. xv. 9. (g) 2 Cor. iv. 6, 7.

(h) 1 Cor. i. 26, 29. (i) Eph. iii. 2. 2 Cor. xii. 11. 1 Tim. i. 15.

of an insidious politeness, but of a sincere heart. Like a true disciple of Christ, who concealed himself, when the multitude would have raised him to a throne, and who presented himself, when they came to drag him to his cross, thou hast a sacred pleasure in humbling thyself before GOD and man, and art anxious, without hypocrisy or affectation, to take the lowest place among thy brethren.

The humble christian, convinced of his wants and his weakness, feels it impossible to act like those proud and bashful poor, who will rather perish in their distress, than solicit the assistance of their brethren. St. Paul had nothing of this false modesty about him. Penetrated with a deep sense of his own unworthiness and insufficiency, after imploring for himself the gracious assistance of GOD, he thus humbly solicits the prayers of all the faithful: *Brethren, pray for us (k). I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together in your prayers for me (l). Pray always for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak (m): You also continuing to help by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given on our behalf (n).*

Thus

(k) 1 Thes. v. 25.

(l) Rom. xv. 30.

(m) Eph. vi. 18, 20.

(n) 2 Cor. i. 11.

Thus *humility*, or *poverty of spirit*, which is set forth by Christ as the first beatitude, leads us, by prayer, to all the benedictions of the Gospel, and to that lively gratitude, which gives birth to thanksgiving and joy. Lovely humility ! penetrate the hearts of all christians, animate every pastor, give peace to the church, and happiness to the universe.

NOTE XI.

HUMILITY is, at once, the ground-work and perfection of christianity. Where this holy temper increases in the soul, there every grace is proportionably carried towards a state of maturity ; but wherever this is wanting, there, sooner or later, every appearance of grace must wither and die : *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.* Examples of deep humility are uncommon, even in the church of Christ : but among the rarest examples of this kind, our author must be allowed a distinguished place. From his natural disposition, perhaps no man had ever greater opposition to struggle against in his progress to humility : but as few professors of religion were ever known to resist their natural propensities with so determined a resolution, few ever gained so complete a victory over themselves as M. de la Fléchère. Lowliness of mind was considered, by the generality of his friends, as the most distinguishing trait in the character of this great man

man; and it may be truly asserted, that no person ever conversed with him, either at home or abroad, without being struck with the genuine meekness and simplicity of his whole carriage. This admirable disposition, which is lovely in the lowest of its possessors was peculiarly striking in him, where it appeared amid an uncommon variety of accomplishments, and attended with a train of excellent graces.

Wherever he appeared, he was seen, according to the advice of St. Peter, completely *clothed in humility*: and though there was something, unhappily, singular, in this truly christian garb, yet its unaffected comeliness was universally acknowledged and admired. Many, who think it necessary to appear before God in a state of humiliation, come forth from their closets, and walk into the world with an air of conscious superiority: as though it was possible, at the same time, *to walk humbly before God*, and haughtily in the presence of their fellow-creatures. But the man, whose character I attempt to describe was perfectly consistent with himself. Such as he appeared before God in his private acts of devotion, such he appeared before men in every part of social and public life. He aspired not after high things, but condescended to men of low estate. His family and connections, his attainments in science and in grace, with whatever else might be considered, as tending to his advantage, he regarded as matters of trivial estimation; while in the lowliness of his heart he adopted the language of the great Apostle: *God forbid, that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* In honor he preferred

ferred all men before himself, and never appeared so perfectly satisfied with his station, as when his humble employments bespoke him the servant of all. So unlimited was his condescension in this respect, that he esteemed no occupation too low or degrading, by which he might benefit his neighbour, or by which he might testify respect either to God or man.

I cannot forbear relating here a little circumstance, which may perhaps appear trifling to some, but which uncommonly affected me at the time it happened. M. de la Fléchère was called out to attend the sick. In the mean-time a funeral was announced; and I was happy to embrace an opportunity of affording the least assistance to this venerable man, in the course of his extensive labors. While I was engaged in reading the office on that occasion, M. de la Fléchère, who had heard at a distance the call of the bells, entered hastily into the church; and as he passed up the aisle, observing that a young lad was officiating in the absence of the clerk, he instantly took his place, and went through the whole of the service with a degree of humility and composure, that cannot be expressed. He afterwards assured me, that while he beheld me kindly performing the duty of an absent minister, he could not observe the place of an inferior servant of the church improperly filled up, without attempting to supply it himself with a greater degree of decorum and reverence. I shall close this note with another anecdote to the same purpose. While M. de la Fléchère continued tutor to the young men at Tern-Hall, he usually attended the ministry of the

Reverend

Reverend Mr. Cartwright, pastor of a neighbouring church, a man of whose piety and zeal he made frequent and honorable mention. It was the custom of this gentleman frequently to catechize in public the children of his parish. And on one of these occasions he requested, that no person of maturer age, who stood in need of instruction, would esteem it a disgrace to appear in the number of the catechumens. When no one had condescension enough to occupy so mean a station, M. de la Fléchère left his seat, and with an air of unaffected modesty took his place among the children; giving a public proof, by the depth of his humility, that he was in an advanced state of preparation for the highest degrees of exaltation.

T R A I T X I I.

*THE INGENUOUS MANNER, IN WHICH HE
ACKNOWLEDGED AND REPAIRED HIS
ERRORS.*

IT is difficult for a proud man to confess himself in an error: but they, who are possessed of humility and love, can make such acknowledgments with cheerfulness. When St. Paul was called upon to justify his conduct before the tribunal of the jews, the same spirit of resentment which animated his persecutors suddenly seized upon the

the more passionate of his judges, when the High Priest, still more exasperated than the rest, commanded those, who stood near Paul *to smite him on the mouth.* It was in that moment of surprize and indignation, that the apostle, unacquainted with the author of so indecent a proceeding, and not imagining, that the president of an august assembly could so far forget his own dignity, as to act with so reprehensible an impetuosity, gave this sharp reply to so unjust an order; *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the Law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the Law?* Immediately those, who stood by, reproaching him with his apparent disrespectful carriage, enquired with the utmost indignation, *Revilest thou God's high Priest?* Here the apostle far from justifying his own conduct, in resenting the severity of a judge, who had degraded himself by an act of the most flagrant injustice, immediately acknowledged his error: and lest the example he had given should encourage any person to withhold the respect due to a magistrate, still more respectable by his office than blameable by his rigorous proceedings, he endeavoured to make instant reparation for his involuntary offence by citing a pertinent passage from the law, answering with all meekness; *I wist not, brethren, that he was the high Priest: for it is written,*
Thou

Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people (a).

There is another instance of the indiscretion and candor of this Apostle. Paul and Barnabas going forth to publish the Gospel, took for their companion John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas. That young evangelist, however, staggered by the dangers, which those apostles were constantly obliged to encounter, forsook them at Pamphilia in the midst of their painful labors. But afterwards, repenting of his former irresolution, he offered to accompany them in another journey. Barnabas, who had charity enough to hope all things of his nephew, wished to afford him a second trial: while Paul, whose prudence taught him to fear every thing from a young man, who had already given an indisputable proof of his inconsistency, refused his consent. At length the two Apostles, unable to decide the matter to their mutual satisfaction, took the resolution of separating one from another. Paul went to preach the Gospel in Syria with Silas; while Barnabas, accompanied by his nephew, proceeded to proclaim Christ in the isle of Cyprus. Thus the separations of true christians, without producing any schism in the church, frequently tend to the propagation of the Gospel.

Time alone could determine, whether Barnabas was deceived by an abundance of *charity*, or St.

Paul

(a) Acts xxiii. 2, 5.

Paul through an excess of *prudence*. The event turned the balance in favor of the judgment of Barnabas: the conduct of John Mark on this second mission was irreproachable.

From that time St. Paul, with his usual candor, forgetting the former instability of Mark, placed the utmost confidence in him, received him with joy as the companion of his labors, revoked the order he had formerly given respecting him, and recommended him to the churches as a faithful minister. Thus much may be inferred from the following passage in his epistle to the Colossians:

Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him (b).

Thus the sincere followers of Christ are ever anxious to repair their involuntary faults: faults which *we*, as well as the apostles, are always exposed to the commission of, and which should constrain us to say, with St. Paul; *Now we know things and persons in part*. This imperfection in our knowledge will sometimes produce errors in our judgment, and those errors may probably influence our conduct. But, if in these failings there is no mixture of malice; if we sin through ignorance, and in the integrity of our hearts, God imputes not to us those errors; provided that we are always prepared, like St. Paul, to confess

(b) Colos. iv. 10.

confess and repair them. To err is the lot of humanity: obstinacy in error is the character of a Demon: but humbly to acknowledge and anxiously to repair an error, is to exhibit a virtue more rare and valuable than innocence itself, when accompanied with any degree of conceit and pride.

They, who give the portraits of legendary saints, generally paint them without a single failing. But they, who wish faithfully to imitate the sacred authors, are obliged to employ shades as well as lights, even in their most celebrated pieces. If this part of the portrait of St. Paul should not appear brilliant, it will serve, at least, to manifest the reality of the original, the liberality of the Apostle, and the fidelity of the painter.

NOTE XII.

WHATEVER solicitude I might have to perpetuate the memory of those errors and failings, which have at any time appeared in the character of M. de la Fléchère, I should be utterly at a loss from what quarter to collect authentic documents, relative to this part of my subject. Had he ever sat down to a sketch of his own life, an undertaking to which he was repeatedly urged by a multitude of his friends, it is most probable the world would then have been presented with a large detail of those defects

fects and indiscretions, which were scarcely apparent to any eye but his own. It is not meant to be insinuated here, that M. de la Fléchère was entirely free from those imperfections and infirmities, by which, in different degrees, the most exalted characters have been tainted. But it may be safely affirmed, that those few imperfections were so outnumbered and obscured by his uncommon excellencies, that they could not long detain the eye even of malice itself. The only defect in his character, which ever fixed the attention even of those, who may be suspected to have passed by his merits without the regard they deserved, was a certain warmth in his temper, which has appeared upon a variety of occasions. But with respect to this acknowledged warmth, it must be allowed by all, that it was at no time discoverable in him, except when he was called forth to act either as a lover of truth, or a reprover of sin. In these two characters, indeed, he constantly appeared with a degree of zeal, which gave offence to many, but which was entirely consistent with his high reputation for meekness and charity. He was not ashamed, however, openly to confess and bewail this apparent defect; and if ever it betrayed him into any error, he discovered the utmost solicitude, till he could make some suitable reparation. I shall content myself with presenting the reader with two instances of his conduct in this particular.

In one period of his life, he considered himself obliged to wield the controversial pen. As the dispute was supposed to be of importance, so it was of long continuance, and maintained on all sides with

a considerable degree of warmth. In the course of the controversy it was objected against our author, that he managed the debate with an acrimonious severity which was equally ill adapted both to the nature of his cause, and the characters of his opponents. Though this charge might have been retorted upon some of his antagonists with tenfold force, yet he frankly admitted it on their part, and stood self-abased amid the loudest plaudits of his friends. Before the dispute was completely terminated, his declining state of health obliged him to quit the kingdom with very little hope of ever visiting it again. But he found it impossible to do this without giving an intimation to his opponents, that he desired nothing so much as an opportunity of embracing them before his departure; that, all doctrinal differences apart, he might testify his sincere regret on account of having given them the least displeasure, and receive from them some condescending assurance of reconciliation and good-will. Those of his antagonists, who had generosity sufficient to accept his invitation, were equally affected and refreshed by the solemn interview that succeeded. And some of them, who before that time had no personal acquaintance with him, expressed the highest satisfaction at being introduced to the company of one, whose air and countenance bespoke him fitted rather for the society of angels, than the conversation of men.

A second instance of the manner in which he acknowledged and repaired his errors, is as follows. While he was one day interring a corpse, he was suddenly

suddenly interrupted in his duty by a voice of execration and blasphemy. Instantly with a look of holy indignation, he turned to that part of the multitude, whence the voice appeared to proceed; and singling out, as he supposed, the guilty person, he publicly rebuked her in terms as severe, as the nature of the offence demanded. After the service was concluded, he received information, that his rebuke had been improperly directed — When he immediately recalled the people, who were then dispersing from the grave; and pointing to the person, whom he had unwittingly injured, he expressed the utmost concern at having confounded the innocent with the guilty, and declared, that as his error was public, so he desired publicly to solicit the pardon of the offended party.

These may serve as sufficient proofs of the candid and condescending manner, in which M. de la Fléchère was accustomed to acknowledge and repair those unintentional errors, which neither his wisdom nor his piety could wholly prevent.

TRAIT XIII.

HIS DETESTATION OF PARTY-SPIRIT AND DIVISIONS.

WHILE the spirit of the world is confessedly a spirit of particular interest,
 G 2 pride,

pride, and division, the spirit of true religion is manifested, among its sincere professors, as a spirit of concord, humility, and brotherly love. The true minister, animated in an especial manner by this divine spirit, losing sight of his own reputation and honor, is unweariedly engaged in seeking the glory of God, and the edification of his neighbour. Perfectly satisfied with the lowest place, and distinguished as much by condescension to his brethren as by respect to his superiors, he is ever on his guard against that spirit of party, which is continually seeking to disturb the union of the church, whether it be by too great a fondness for particular customs, by an obstinate zeal for any system of doctrines, or by too passionate an attachment to some eminent teacher.

Without persecuting those, who are led by so dangerous a spirit, the good pastor employs every effort to reunite them under the great Head of the church. Arguing against the folly of those who are ready to separate themselves from the company of their brethren, he takes up the language of St. Paul, and says: *O foolish christians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh (a)? Ye have indeed, been called*

unto

(a) Gal. iii. 1—3.

unto liberty: only use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, among which are these, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions and heresies: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they, which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance. If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another (b). There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Endeavour, therefore, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (c).

When the people seek to honor a true minister by placing him at the head of any party in the church, he refuses the proffered dignity with a humble and holy indignation. His soul is constantly penetrated with those sentiments, under the influence of which the apostle Paul thus nobly expressed himself: *I seek not mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved* (d).

G 3

I beseech

(b) Gal. v. 13—26. (c) Eph. iv. 3—6. (d) 1 Cor. x. 33.

I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind. For it hath been declared unto me, that there are contentions among you; and that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and, I of Apollos, and, I of Cephas, and, I of Christ. But, Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul (e)? Who is Paul, but a minister by whom ye believed? Therefore let no man glory in men, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas (f); but rather in our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named (g).

By such exhortations, it is, and by maintaining, at the same time, a conduct conformable to the nature of such exhortations, that every faithful minister endeavors to engage christians of all denominations, to walk together in love, as Christ also walked (h), proving what is acceptable unto the Lord (i), and submitting one to another in the fear of God (k), till the arrival of that promised period, when the whole company of the faithful shall be of one heart and one mind.

But after all these exertions, for the extirpation of a sectarian spirit from the church, they, who content themselves with the exterior of christianity, as the pharisees were contented with the ceremonies

(e) 1 Cor. i. 10, 13. (f) 1 Cor. iii. 5, 21, 22. (g) Eph. iii. 14, 15

(h) Eph. v. 2. (i) v. 10. (k) v. 11.

ceremonies of the mosaic worship, will, sooner or later, accuse every evangelical pastor of attempting to form a particular sect. When modern pharisees observe the strict union, which reigns among true believers, a union, which every faithful minister labors to establish among his people, as well by example as by precept; when they behold penitent sinners deeply sensible of their guilt, and frequently assembling together for the purpose of imploring the blessings of *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*; they immediately take the alarm, and cry out—*These men do exceedingly trouble our city, teaching customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, and maintaining such a conduct as is most inconvenient for us to follow* (l).

Happy are those cities, in which the minister of Christ is able to discover a Nicodemus, a Gamaliel, or some worshippers possessed of as much candor as the jews of Rome, who desired to hear what the persecuted Paul had to offer, in behalf of that newly-risen sect, which was everywhere *spoken against* (m). Till this amiable candor shall universally prevail among the nominal members of the church, true christianity, even in the centre of Christendom, will always find perverse contradiction, and sometimes cruel persecution.

(l) Acts xvi. 20, 21. (m) Acts xxvii. 22.

NOTE XIII.

FULLY persuaded, that *a house divided against itself cannot stand*, M. de la Fléchère was anxious to maintain a state of uninterrupted peace and unanimity in the household of God. As a fellow-citizen with the saints, he considered himself essentially interested in the weal or woe of his brethren, and was constantly observed, either mingling his tears with those, who wept, or triumphing in the joy of such, as rejoiced before God. Hence, he could not behold, as an unconcerned spectator, the distress, to which the church was exposed in his day, and the dissensions, by which it was torn in pieces; but rather as a true disciple of that gracious Redeemer, who *loved the church and gave himself for it*. He was engaged, indeed, in those great debates, which disturbed the tranquillity of the religious world for so long a season; and during those sharp contests, he appeared, it is true, in the very front of the battle. To all, who knew him, however, it was sufficiently evident, that he entered not into the conflict with any design, either to signalize himself, or to establish the reputation of a party; but rather to confirm and build up the church in her most holy faith. Zeal for God constrained him, upon this occasion, to take up a cross, which he regarded as almost insupportable; and when he came forth from the retirement he loved, in the character of a public disputant, he came forth with the language of the evangelical prophet
in

in his mouth: *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof, as a lamp that burneth.* His attacks were constantly directed, not against the leaders of any particular sect, but against the errors of every sect: and in carrying on these attacks, he manifested a degree of impartiality and candor, which few have ever discovered in similar circumstances. While he cautiously exposed the apparent mistakes of his opponents; he put his own religious opinions to a fiery trial, and whatever was unable to stand the severest test, he considered as no better than vanity and dross. Like the apostle Paul, *he could do nothing knowingly against the truth, but for the truth:* and on whatever side this was discoverable, he saluted it with all that respect and veneration, which effectually distinguished him as a lover of truth.

Through the whole of the contest he treated his opponents with much deference and regard, cordially acknowledging them as brethren in Christ, and constantly mentioning them as persons, whose piety and zeal could scarcely be paralleled. He ardently desired to embrace them, as his companions in the kingdom and patience of their common Master; and as a standing proof of his pacific disposition toward them, one of the last pieces he published in the controversy was entitled, *The Reconciliation*: a work, in which he urged the strongest motives to charity and concord, endeavouring, by every possible means, to prevail with the professing part of the world, to *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*

peace The following passage selected from that work will sufficiently evince his utter detestation of party-spirit and divisions in the christian church.

“ Come with me, my calvinian and arminian brethren, to the temple of Peace, where *the Lord’s banner over you will be love*, and his mercy will comfort you on every side. If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye the joy of all, who wish Sion’s prosperity: Be like minded, having the same love; being of one accord, of one mind, submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. He is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ, in whom there is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, neither calvinist nor arminian, but Christ is all in all. My heart is enlarged: for a recompense in the same, be ye also enlarged, and grant me my humble—perhaps my dying request: reject not my plea for peace. If it be not strong, it is earnest; for (considering my bodily weakness) I write at the hazard of my life; *animamque in vulnere pono.*”

Such was the catholic spirit, discovered by this great man, in the warmest of his religious contentions; such was the forbearance and affection, which he constantly exercised toward the most zealous of his opposers; and such was his anxious concern, that every inferior name might be lost in that exalted name, by which alone the world can be saved.

 T R A I T XIV.

HIS REJECTION OF PRAISE.

THE minister of the present day labors chiefly with a view to his own advantage and honor. He endeavours to please, that he may be admired of men. *He loves the chief seats in synagogues, public greetings, and honorable titles (a):* thus tacitly challenging, by his unreasonable pretensions to the respect and homage of men, a part of that glory, which is due to God alone.

A totally different character is maintained by the true minister. His discourses, his actions, his look, his deportment, all agree to say, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake (b).* If the arm of the Omnipotent enables him to perform any extraordinary work, which the multitude do not immediately refer to the *Author of every good and perfect gift*, he cries out with St. Peter, *Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had performed what appears to excite your astonishment? The God of our fathers hath, upon this occasion, glorified his*

G 6

Son.

(a) Matt. xxiii, 6, 7.

(b) Psalm cxv, i.

Son Jesus: and the faith, which is by him, hath effected this extraordinary work in the presence of you all (b).

On all occasions he can say with the great Apostle: *Do I seek to please men? if I yet pleased men, unless for their edification, I should not be the servant of Christ* (c). *With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment* (d). *But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts. Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others* (e). By such a conduct he distinguishes himself, as a faithful ambassador of the blessed Jesus, who expressed himself in the following lowly terms, to those, who had reproached him with a spirit of self-exaltation: *I do nothing of myself, but as my father hath taught me, I speak these things. I seek not mine own glory: there is one, that seeketh and judgeth. If I honor myself, my honor is nothing. It is my Father, that honoreth me; of whom ye say, that He is your God* (f).

There may be peculiar cases, in which a ministering servant of God may be allowed to call upon christians, for a public testimony of their approbation; and when this is refused, he is justified in modestly calling their attention to every past proof of his integrity and zeal. Thus St. Paul, as a proper

(b) Acts iii. 12, 13, 16.

(c) Gal. i. 10.

(d) 1 Cor. iv. 3.

(e) 1 Thes. ii. 4, 6.

(f) John viii. 28, 50, 54.

proper means of maintaining his authority among the Corinthians, who had manifested an unjust partiality toward teachers of a very inferior order, entered into a long detail of those revelations and labors, which gave him a more than ordinary claim to the respect of every church. But whenever he commended himself, he did it with the utmost reluctance, as one constrained by the peculiarity of his circumstances to act in immediate contrariety to his real disposition. Hence, whenever he recounts the particular favors, with which God had honored him, he speaks in the third person, as of another man: *Of such a one will I glory; yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities (g). For we dare not make ourselves of the number of those, who commend themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, without any reference to the excellent graces and endowments of others. But he, that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he, that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth (h).*

Nothing affords greater satisfaction to false apostles than commendation and praise; while the true minister shrinks with horror from those very honors, which they assume all the forms of Proteus to obtain. When the multitude, led by their admiration of a faithful preacher, follow him with unsuitable expressions of applause, he meets them with unfeigned indignation, arrests their im-

pious

(g) 2 Cor, xii. 5.

(h) 2 Cor. x. 12, 18.

pious plaudits, and rejects their idolatrous adulations, crying out with St. Paul—*Sirs! why do ye these things? we also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God* (i). We are neither the way, the truth, nor the life: but we point you to that way, which the truth has discovered, and through which eternal life may be obtained, entreating you to walk therein with all simplicity and meekness. And remember, that instead of affecting in our discourses that vain wisdom, which the world so passionately admires, we faithfully proclaim Christ: and, to humble us the more before God and man, *we preach Christ crucified* (k).

By this humble carriage the ministring disciples of Christ are principally known. By this they copy the amiable example of John the baptist who cheerfully humbled himself, that Christ might be exalted, crying out in the language of that self-renouncing teacher—*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! There standeth one among you, whom ye know not, whose shoes latchet we are not worthy to unloose. We baptize with water: but he baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.* Beware then of entertaining too high an idea of our ministry; and remember, that *He must increase* in your estimation, *but we must decrease* (l).

After beholding John the baptist, who was accounted greater than any of the prophets, abasing himself

(i) Acts xiv. 13, 15. (k) 1 Cor. i. 23. (l) John i. 26, 33. iii. 30.

himself in the presence of Christ ; and after hearing St. Paul, who was far superior to the Baptist, exclaiming in the humility of his soul—*I live not ; but Christ liveth in me*—how can we sufficiently express our astonishment at the conduct of those titular apostles, who either set up a vain philosophy in the place of Christ, or employ the cross of their Lord, as a kind of pedestal, for the support of those splendid monuments, by which their pride is endeavouring to perpetuate the memory of their eloquence. Self-conceited orators ! When shall we rank you with the faithful ministers of the humble Jesus ? When shall we behold the character you have assumed, and the conduct you maintain sweetly harmonizing with each other ? When shall we hear you addressing your flocks, with the unaffected simplicity and condescension of the great apostle : *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and, far from elevating ourselves above you, on account of the commission we have received, ourselves your servants for Jesus sake* (m). Then we might with propriety salute you, as humble imitators of St. Paul, as zealous ministers of the Gospel, and as faithful servants of that condescending Saviour, who *came not to be ministere unto, but to minister* (n).

(m) 2 Cor. iv. 5.

(n) Matt. xx, 28.

NOTE XIV,

AMONG all the candidates for human praise, there is none more conspicuous, than the man, who exhibits his pretensions to applause from the pulpit. Dishonorable as it is to the cause of christianity, the place, from which humility and self-denial were formerly recommended to the world, is frequently employed by modern divines, as a stage, for the ostentatious display of their superior parts and accomplishments. Preferring the praise of men before the honor, that cometh from God, multitudes of pastors are more solicitous to be ranked with profound theologists, elegant scholars, and masters of elocution, than to be numbered among the zealous and unaffected preachers of the everlasting Gospel. They court the applause of the world, by seeking after such qualifications, as will naturally recommend them to its favor; while they secure themselves from its reproaches, by carefully avoiding whatever might tend to degrade them in its estimation. In short, they are abundantly more solicitous for the advancement of their own reputation, than for the honor of their Master, or the increase of his Kingdom.

Between pastors of this description and M. de la Fléchère, the most distant resemblance was not to be discovered. The favor of God was his ultimate aim through life; and for the possession of so invaluable a privilege, he was content to forego the riches, the friendship, and even the good opinion of the world. Despising the common pursuits of
men,

men, he aspired after that true greatness, which never yet excited the envy of the mighty, or the emulation of the ambitious. *Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report*, in such things he was daily and diligently occupied; not that the report of his virtues might raise his reputation among men, but rather, that he might become *an example to believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in spirit, in purity*. Though few men have ever had so just a claim as himself to universal approbation, yet no man ever appeared so perfectly deaf to the Syren voice of admiration and praise. He permitted nothing to be related in his presence, that apparently tended to his advantage. He could bear his actions censured, his opinions condemned, and his character traduced, with an astonishing degree of silent composure. But if at any time his virtues or abilities were mentioned, with the least appearance of respect, he would instantly put a stop to the conversation, with an air of severity, which he seldom assumed upon any other occasion. On matters of this nature, he resolutely refused to hear the voice of the charmer, with whatever discretion and delicacy the subject might be attempted. He counted himself no better than an unprofitable servant; and as such, it was an invariable rule with him, in every company, to take the lowest seat, which he occupied not as a man, who was conscious, that his merits entitled him to a more honorable place, but rather as one, who considered himself unworthy the favor of God or the notice of man,

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As an ambassador of Jesus Christ, he sought not his own honor, but the honor of him, that sent him. Neither exalted by the grace he had received, nor elated with his success in the ministry, he still opened his commission in every place in the lowly manner of the great apostle: *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.* He counted nothing either upon his attainments, or his talents. Instead of endeavouring to make a pompous display of his excellencies, he studiously concealed them from the notice of the world: and whether he was engaged in planting with Paul, or in watering with Apollos, he sought to turn every eye from the person of the laborer, to the presence of that God, who alone can give the increase. Far from courting the applause of a world, in which his Lord had been publicly despised and rejected, he was sincerely disposed to drink of the cup, and to be baptized with the baptism of his Master. Instead of toiling for the triumphs of vain glory, he inured himself to bear the reproach of the cross; and instead of soliciting the smiles of the world, he prepared himself to endure *the contradictions of sinners.* Fully persuaded, that *it is enough for the disciple, that he be as his Master,* he sought after an entire conformity to the mind and character of his Lord. Though formed to preside, he voluntarily took upon himself the form of a servant, and submitted to the lowest offices of condescension and charity. Though capable, as a preacher, of fixing the attention and raising the admiration of the multitude, he absolutely

lutely renounced all pretensions to regard, and modestly made himself of no reputation. As a proof, that he was not ambitious either of the uppermost seats in synagogues, or of honorable salutations in places of public resort, he labored for the church in a state of comparative retirement and obscurity: manifestly evidencing to all around him, that he came *not to be ministered unto, but to minister.* In this unenvied situation of his choice, he spent the laborious days of a useful life, *as unknown, yet well-known; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.* Thus, by a patient continuance in well-doing, he sought for glory, honor, and immortality, unnoticed by the ambitious and the vain, but eminently conspicuous among those, *whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

T R A I T X V .

HIS UNIVERSAL LOVE.

TRUE christians are distinguished from Jews, Mahometans, and all other worshippers, by that spirit of universal love, which is the chief ornament and glory of their profession. But among evangelical pastors this holy disposition appears in a more eminent degree. They feel for the inconsiderate and the sinful that tender compassion, of which Christ has left us an example.

ample. Their conduct answers to that beautiful description of charity, with which St. Paul presented the Corinthian church, and which may be considered, as an emblematical representation of his own character from the time of his conversion to the christian faith.

Universal love is that invigorating sap, which, passing from the *true vine* into its several branches, renders them fruitful in every good work. But this divine principle circulates through chosen ministers, with peculiar force, and in more than ordinary abundance, as so many principal boughs, by which a communication is opened between the root and the lesser branches.

The faithful pastor entertains an affecting remembrance of those benevolent expressions, which the good Shepherd addressed to the apostle Peter, and in the person of that apostle to all his successors in the ministry, repeating them even to the third time: *Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep.* As though he had said, the greatest proof you can possibly give of your unfeigned attachment to me, is, to cherish the souls, which I have redeemed, and to make them the objects of your tenderest regard.

Such is the affectionate precept, which every faithful minister has received together with his sacred commission, and to which he yields a more ready and cheerful obedience, from a firm dependance upon the following solemn declaration of his gracious Master — *When the Son of man shall*

shall come in his glory, he shall say to all the children of love, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done good unto one of the least of these my brethren, whether their wants were corporeal or spiritual, ye have done it unto me (a).

The love of the evangelical pastor, like that of St. Paul, is unbounded. God, saith that charitable apostle, *will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth: I exhort, therefore, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour (b).* But not content with submitting to the exhortation of St. Paul, with respect to the duty of universal prayer, he endeavours to copy the example of that apostle, in laboring for the salvation of all men: *I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some (c).* Being by regeneration a partaker of the divine nature (d), he bears a lovely, though imperfect resemblance to his Heavenly Parent, whose chief perfection is Love. Like the High Priest of his profession, he breathes nothing but charity; and like the Father of lights, he makes the sun of his beneficence to rise upon all men. To describe this lesser sun in its unlimited course, and to point out the admirable variety, with which it distributes its light and its heat, is to delineate with precision the character of a faithful pastor.

NOTE

(a) Matt. xxv. 31, 40. (b) 1 Tim. ii. 4. (c) 1 Cor. ix. 22.

(d) 2 Peter i. 4.

NOTE XV.

HE that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. This distinguishing mark of an indwelling Deity was strikingly apparent in the person and character of M. de la Fléchère. His person presented the fairest indications, and his character afforded the strongest testimonies of benevolence and charity. His love was free and unconfined, uninterrupted by prejudice, and unmixed with suspicion. He had a place in his large and generous heart for persons of every description. He considered himself as related to the inhabitants of every nation, and connected with the members of every church; appearing, in every sense, as a citizen of the world, honoring the whole human race as the offspring of God, and encircling them all with the arms of brotherly affection, however distinguished from one another by situation or endowments, opinions or habits. He never left his beloved retirement, which was rendered sacred by converse with the highest object of his affections, unless he was called abroad upon errands of kindness and mercy. And whenever he came forth into the world, he looked upon all around him, with an air of benignity, and a glow of affection, which strongly marked him as a follower of that God, *who is loving unto every man, and whose mercy is over all his works.* Instead of enquiring with the lawyer in the Gospel, Who is my neighbour? he acted like the good Samaritan, treating even the stranger and the outcast, as he journeyed through

through life, with the kindness of a neighbour, the sympathy of a friend, and the tenderness of a brother. While self-love may be likened to a stagnant lake, the charity of this self-renouncing pastor may be fitly compared to a copious river, which, after enriching a multitude of towns, villages, and hamlets, and after fertilizing a thousand fields, loses itself in the bosom of the ocean, from whence it sprung. And here it may be properly observed, that this noble current was sufficiently deep to sustain any burden, and sufficiently rapid to force itself a passage through every obstruction.

His love was *without dissimulation, not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* It was larger than his lar t professions, and appeared, on different occasions, in a vast variety of forms, in condescension, in compassion, in hospitality, in forbearance, in kindness, and in liberality. By these benevolent dispositions, together with those affectionate labors, in which he was constantly employed, he gave the most convincing proofs, that he was *rooted and grounded in that universal love, which is the fulfilling of the whole law.*

T R A I T X V I.

HIS PARTICULAR LOVE TO THE FAITHFUL.

THE universal love of the true minister manifests itself in a particular manner, according

according to the different situations of those, who are the objects of it. When he finds the whole conduct of professing christians conformable to the nature of their sacred profession, *he loves them with a pure heart fervently* (a); and giving way to the effusions of a holy joy, he expresses his affection in words like these: *Brethren, we are comforted over you, in all our affliction and distress, by your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. And what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy, wherewith we joy for your sakes before God* (b)! In these expressions of St. Paul an astonishing degree of affection is discovered. *Now we live*—as though he had said, We have a two-fold life; the *principal life* which we receive immediately from Christ, and an *accessory life*, which we derive from his members, through the medium of brotherly love. And so deeply are we interested in the concerns of our brethren, that we are sensibly affected by the variations they experience in their spiritual state, through the power of that christian sympathy, which we are unable to describe. Thus when sin has detached any of our brethren from Christ, and separated them from the body of the faithful, we are penetrated with the most sincere distress: and, on the contrary, whenever they become more affectionately connected with us, and more intimately united to Christ, our common

(a) 1 Pet. i. 22.

(b) 1 Theff. iii. 7, 9.

mon Head, our spirits are then sensibly refreshed, and invigorated with new degrees of life and joy.

Reader, dost thou understand this language? Hast thou felt the power of this christian sympathy? Or has thy faith never yet produced these genuine sentiments of brotherly love? Then thou hast spoken as a person equally destitute of sensibility and truth, whenever thou hast dared to say—*I believe in the communion of saints.*

NOTE XVI.

TO love any thing, which in itself is unamiable and impure, is altogether contrary to the spirit and profession of christianity. *The pure in heart* are enabled to discover something of God in every man: and as the Deity is the supreme object of their affections, their love to every particular person is in proportion to the different degrees, in which they severally shadow forth the excellencies and perfection of the Creator. Hence, though M. de la Fléchère could look upon every individual of the human race with emotions of benevolence and charity, yet he was in an especial manner attached to such as were *of the household of faith*. In *those* he discovered the image of Deity defaced and obscured, yet meriting attention even in ruins: in *these*, he beheld the same image expressed with purity and grace sufficient to excite in him the highest degrees of admiration and love.

His fellowship
with

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with persons of this latter description, was intimate and unreserved. He saluted them as the children of God, and honored them, as heirs of an eternal inheritance. These were the companions of his choice, both in public and in private: with these he took sweet and solemn counsel, and with these he rejoiced to worship in the house of God. Whether they were poor or rich, illiterate or learned, bond or free, he considered them as fellow partakers of the same grace, and received them, *without partiality*, as the redeemed of the Lord. He constantly watched over them for good, and eagerly embraced every opportunity of rendering them acceptable service. He bore their burdens, he distributed to their necessities, he covered their defects, and healed their divisions.

Esteeming all the children of God, as *members one of another*, his catholic spirit disdained those unnatural partitions, by which different parties of christians have endeavoured to separate themselves from each other. Sincere worshippers, of whatever denomination they might be, he regarded as *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*; desiring no greater honor than to be counted as their brother, and commanded as their servant.

The following are his own expressions, extracted from a tract already referred to in a preceding note. "God forbid, that I should exclude
 " from my brotherly affection, and occasional assistance, any true minister of Christ, because he
 " casts the Gospel net among the Presbyterians,
 " the Independents, the Quakers, or the Baptists!
 " If they will not wish me good luck in the name
 " of

“ of the Lord, I will do it to them. They may
 “ excommunicate me, if their prejudices prompt
 “ them to it; they may build up a wall of partition
 “ between themselves and me; but, *in the strength*
 “ *of my God*, whose love is as boundless as his im-
 “ *mensity, I will leap over the wall.*” Extra-
 extraordinary as these declarations may appear, they
 are not to be considered, as the professions of an
 affected generosity, but as the sincere expressions of
 a heart overflowing with brotherly love.

Such was the christian charity of this truly ad-
 mirable man, which, in spite of all the impediments
 that could be thrown in its way, was improved to an
 almost incredible degree of maturity—A never-
 failing charity, which taught him to overlook the
 coldness and contempt of his unloving brethren—
 An exuberant charity, which enabled him to ad-
 dress all the differing classes of christians, in the
 language of his Master: *Whoever shall do the will*
of my Father, who is in Heaven, the same is my
brother, and sister, and mother.

T R A I T X V I I .

HIS LOVE TO THOSE, WHOSE FAITH WAS
 WAVERING.

WHEN a minister, after having been
 made instrumental in the conversion of
 H 2 sinners,

sinners, perceives their faith decreasing, and their love growing cold, he feels for them, what the Redeemer felt, when he wept over Jerusalem. Not less concerned for the remissness of his believing hearers, than St. Paul was distressed by the instability of his Galatian and Corinthian converts, he pleads with them in the same affectionate terms: *Ye know, ye who are the seals of my ministry, how I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And ye despised me not, but received me as an Angel of God. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you, I tell you with sorrow, that after all my confidence in you, I stand in doubt of you (a). Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children) be ye also enlarged. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what part hath he, that believeth, with an infidel? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall*

(a) Gal. iv. 13-20.

shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. We beseech you, therefore brethren, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (b).

This language of the christian pastor is almost unintelligible to the minister, who is merely of man's appointing. Having never converted a single soul to Christ, he has neither spiritual son nor daughter, and is entirely unacquainted with that painful *travail*, which is mentioned by St. Paul. His bowels are straitened towards Christ and his members, and having closely united himself to the men of the world, he considers the assembly of the faithful as a company of ignorant enthusiasts. But, notwithstanding the spiritual insensibility of these ill-instructed teachers, who never studied in the school of Christ, there is no other token, by which either sincere christians or true ministers can be discerned, except that fervent love, which the Galatians entertained for St. Paul, before their falling away, and which that Apostle ever continued to entertain for them. *By this, saith our LORD, shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (c).*

NOTE XVII.

THE weak and the wavering have in every age outnumbered the vigorous and unshaken professors

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(b) 2 Cor. vi. (c) John xiii. 35.

of christianity. M. de la Fléchère beheld in his day, with inexpressible concern, the increasing class of unsteady believers: but, while he bewailed their instability, he allowed them an ample share in his affection. Far from despising the day of small things, he labored, with the most affectionate solicitude, to *strengthen the weak hand and confirm the feeble knee* of every wavering professor. His anxiety for their advancement in grace was discovered in every possible way, and his whole deportment toward them was marked with unusual tenderness and regard. He followed them with unwearied attention, till he could discover the particular causes of their spiritual decay: and when these were once ascertained, he employed the most laborious efforts for their removal. He carefully acquainted himself with the peculiar circumstances and disposition of the unstable party, skilfully adapting both his language and his manner to the nature of their past attainments, and their present deficiencies. He argued against their fears, he satisfied their doubts, he bewailed their lukewarmness, and reminded them of their privileges; entreating or rebuking, consoling or censuring them, *with all long-suffering*. In the mean time, he not only avoided, in his own conduct, whatever might have a tendency to offend or unsettle their minds, but admonished the stronger brethren to maintain, towards their feeble companions, a carriage regulated by more than ordinary circumspection and kindness.

Thus after having used every generous endeavour for the restoration of the weak, and after having removed

moved every apparent obstacle from their path, in the spirit of supplication and prayer he would watch for their return. And whenever he perceived in them the first indications of a holy resolution, it cannot be told with what meltings of heart he would fly to embrace them; how graciously he would condescend to their weakness, how carefully he would support their steps, and with how much affectionate counsel he would guide them in the way. On these occasions, especially, he *put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and forbearance*, exhibiting through his whole conduct a lovely imitation of that great Shepherd, who *gathers the lambs with his arm, and gently leads those, that are with young.*

T R A I T XVIII.

HIS LOVE TO HIS COUNTRYMEN AND HIS ENEMIES.

ST. Paul, like his rejected master, was persecuted even to death by the Jews, his countrymen, while he generously exposed himself to innumerable hardships, in laboring for their good. These furious devotees, inspired with envy, revenge, and a persecuting zeal, hunted this Apostle from place to place, as a public pest. And when the Gentiles, on a certain oc-
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casion,

caſion, had reſcued him out of their hands, forty of the moſt hardened among them engaged themſelves, by an oath, neither to eat nor drink, till they had aſſaſinated him. But notwithſtanding the moſt indubitable proofs of their bloody diſpoſition towards him, his fervent charity threw a vail over their cruelty, and made him wiſh to die for his perſecutors. *I declare, faith he, the truth in Chriſt, my conſcience alſo bearing me witneſs in the Holy Ghoſt, that I have great heavineſs and continual ſorrow in my heart : for I could wiſh, that myſelf were accuſed from Chriſt for my brethren, my kiſmen according to the fleſh (a).* As though he ſhould ſay ; *It is written, curſed is every one, that hangeth on a tree (b) :* Thus Chriſt himſelf became accuſed for us, and I alſo would lay down my life for my brethren, *that I may have fellowſhip with him in his ſufferings being made conformable unto his death (c), and filling up that, which is behind of the afflictions of Chriſt in my fleſh, for his body's ſake, which is the church (d).* It is by expreſſions ſo charitable, and by actions, which demonſtrate the ſincerity of thoſe expreſſions, that chriſtians avenge themſelves of their enemies, and work upon the hearts of their countrymen.

If the ſentiments of every ſincere diſciple of Chriſt are expreſſed in the preceding language of St. Paul, how deplorable then muſt be the ſtate of
those

(a) Rom. ix, 1—3.

(b) Gal. iii. 13.

(c) Phil. iii, 10.

(d) Coloſſ. i. 24.

those christians, whose anxiety, either for their own salvation, or for that of their nearest relations, bears no proportion to that eager concern, which this Apostle manifested for the salvation of his bitterest persecutors ! And if good pastors feel so ardent a desire to behold all men actuated by the spirit of Christ, without excepting even their most malicious enemies, what shall we say to those ministers, who never shed a single tear, nor ever breathed one ardent prayer, for the conversion of their parishioners, their friends, or their families ?

N O T E XVIII.

ON account of that civil and religious liberty, which no other kingdom upon earth can boast, England became the adopted country of M. de la Fléchère. But while he spent a laborious life among the inhabitants of this favored island, his affections were far from being totally alienated from the country of his nativity. He constantly took a brotherly part in the affairs of his countrymen, and manifested a restless solicitude for the advancement of their highest interests. Less concerned for their reputation as a state, than for their superiority as a church, his highest wishes for their welfare are aptly expressed in the language of St. Paul : *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ : that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your*

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affairs,

affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. During

his abode in England, his attachment to his absent countrymen was daily expressed in fervent prayer, and frequently in affectionate epistles addressed to those among them, whose situation and abilities might have rendered them eminently useful to the church. When present with them, his affectionate concern for their happiness was evinced by the most indefatigable exertions for their advancement in religion and virtue. Though he seldom visited the place of his nativity, except, to all appearance, in dying circumstances, yet even in those seasons, the entreaties of friends, the advice of physicians, together with his bodily infirmities, were found insufficient to restrain him from the exercise of his ministry. His manner of employing himself, in these visits, is modestly expressed in an apology, which he once thought it necessary to make for his conduct upon those occasions; from which the following passage is extracted. “ Afflicted with a dangerous disease, and obliged to entrust the care of my church to a substitute, with the permission of my superiors I came to this place, on a visit to my kinsmen, and especially for the purpose of breathing my native air, which the physicians, after having already exhausted their art in my favor, considered as the last remedy, that remained to be tried with any hope of success. Upon my arrival, the pastors of Nyon, to the first of whom I have had the honor of being known for these six and thirty years, obligingly offered

“ offered me the use of their pulpits, if my health
 “ would permit me to preach. But, after appointing
 “ different days, on which I hoped to have taken
 “ the advantage of their friendly offers, by re-
 “ peated returns of my weakness, I was prevented
 “ from fulfilling my engagements. I have, how-
 “ ever, preached three or four times: but observing
 “ in myself, during those exercises, a want of
 “ strength to occupy the pulpit with that power and
 “ dignity, which are expected in a preacher who
 “ appears before a polished audience, I considered
 “ it rather as my duty, with the permission, and
 “ under the inspection of our pastors, without
 “ ascending the pulpit, to give some familiar in-
 “ structions to such children and others, as were
 “ disposed to receive them; offering in a room
 “ from time to time occasional reflections, either
 “ upon some book of piety, or some passage of
 “ Holy Scripture.” Such were his customary
 employments during the several seasons of his tem-
 porary residence at Nyon. And to these pious
 exercises he devoted his little remaining strength
 with that assiduity and perseverance, which abun-
 dantly manifested how little he regarded either ease
 or health, when they came in competition with the
 advantage and welfare of his countrymen. But,
 while he engaged himself with so much zeal in the ser-
 vice of his countrymen at large, among his kinsmen
 and friends his benevolent labors were still more abun-
 dant. He expressed the most vehement desires, and
 employed the most strenuous efforts, that the whole
 circle of his friends might become a people *fearing*

God and working righteousness. He admonished them with the authority of a minister, and entreated them with the gentleness of a brother, mixing both his admonitions and entreaties with many affectionate tears. When he perceived in any of them an inclination to linger, either in the darkness of deism, or in the mazes of dissipation, like the deliverers of Lot, he would stretch out his hand, and endeavour, with a pious violence, to rescue them from the dangers to which they were exposed. And on the other hand, when he discovered in any of his friends the least discernible tokens, either of godly sorrow, or of holy desire, he would give a loose to the fervors of that holy joy which is manifested, on similar occasions, *in the presence of the Angels of God.*

But, perhaps, it is impossible, to give any just idea of the extraordinary concern he expressed for the establishment of his near relations in the faith of the Gospel, except in his own words. The following passages translated from an epistle, which he formerly addressed to his brother the Assessor, will set this amiable part of his disposition in a just point of view. After lamenting, that he had passed so great a part of his own life in the vain pursuits of the world, he continues—
“ And are you not constrained, my dear brother, to
“ make the same lamentations with me? Yes, I
“ cannot but indulge a hope, that God will hear
“ my prayers, that he will have some regard to
“ the tears with which I wet this paper, and that
“ while you are reading these lines, his grace will
“ operate upon your heart. If you did but know,
“ how

“ how much joy there would be in Heaven for your
“ conversion; if you could but conceive, what
“ transports of gratitude would overflow your heart
“ and mine; if you were but sensible, how my
“ bowels are moved for you; surely then, without
“ a moment’s delay, you would submit to the grace
“ of that Saviour, who is even now speaking in
“ your heart. And can you still hold out, my dear
“ brother? And are you so entire an enemy to your
“ own happiness, so insensible, so hard, as to de-
“ cline making a full surrender of yourself to
“ God? I will hope better things of you, through
“ the grace of our common Saviour. O may that
“ grace overwhelm thy heart, and melt down all
“ thy hardness!—As we are of one blood, let us
“ also be of one heart and one soul. Do not reject,
“ I conjure you, my brotherly counsels and sup-
“ plications. I confess, that if you have respect
“ merely to *me* in this matter, you have some
“ reasonable ground for rejecting my solicitations,
“ since you have formerly been a witness to my
“ impiety and abominations*; and I know not,
“ whether I have not more than once attempted
“ to corrupt your virtue. Pardon me, I conjure
“ you, pardon me: forget what is past; and do not
“ attempt to form a judgment of what I now write
“ by any thing, which at other times you have dis-
“ covered in me. Do not refuse to come, where
“ so much felicity awaits you, because pressed to it
“ by a person, who is unworthy to bring you the
“ invitation. We have passed our infancy and our
“ youth

* These harsh expressions relate to some trifling circumstances which happened in his childhood.

“ youth beneath the same roof, and under the same
 “ masters. We have borne the same fatigues, and
 “ tasted the same pleasures. Why then should we
 “ be separated now? Why should *they* be divided,
 “ who, by nature, habit, and friendship, have
 “ been so long united?—I have undertaken a
 “ journey to the new Jerusalem: O suffer me not
 “ to go thither alone. Let neither the fatigues,
 “ nor the length of the way affright you. We shall
 “ be provided, even in the desert, with heavenly
 “ manna and streams of living water. God him-
 “ self shall go before us, as in a pillar of fire;
 “ and under the protection of his wings, we may
 “ walk without fear, *through the valley of the shadow*
 “ *of death.*—Come then, my dear brother! I am
 “ most unwilling to leave you behind. Come; sup-
 “ port me, go before me, encourage me, shew me
 “ the way: I feel the want of a faithful companion,
 “ and a christian friend. Suffer me to throw myself
 “ at your feet, to embrace your knees, and to wash
 “ them with the tears which are now streaming from
 “ my eyes.—I ask no part of your temporal pos-
 “ sessions: but I intreat you to seek after an eternal
 “ inheritance. I desire neither your gold, nor your
 “ silver: but I am anxious, that you should share
 “ my joy. I am solicitous, that you should ac-
 “ company me to *Mount Sion, to the city of the liv-*
 “ *ing God*—that you should mix in that *innumerable*
 “ *company of Angels*, who worship there, and be
 “ counted in the *general assembly and church of the*
 “ *first-born*—In short; I am anxious, my dear
 “ brother, that you should come with me, to have
 “ your

“ your name written in the book of life, and be
“ made free of that holy city, which shall one day
“ descend from God out of Heaven. — I have a
“ *presentiment*, that you will at last submit to the
“ easy yoke of Christ, and that, after you are con-
“ verted, you will strengthen your brethren. Do
“ not tell me again, that piety is usually the por-
“ tion of younger brothers; since I read in the old
“ Testament, that every first-born male should be
“ consecrated, in a peculiar manner, to God. Let
“ me rather entreat you to take the advantage of
“ your situation. Be, at least, as far beyond me
“ in piety, as you are in years: and instead of
“ feeling any jealousy upon this account, my plea-
“ sure will be augmented in the great day of our
“ Lord Jesus Christ, to see myself placed at your
“ feet.”

These quotations may serve as a specimen of the manner, in which he was accustomed to express his ardent desire, in different degrees, for the spiritual prosperity of his countrymen, his friends, and his brethren.

N O T E XVIII. Second part.

HIS LOVE TO HIS ENEMIES.

THE highest degrees of piety are found insufficient to secure a man from the reproaches of the world. On the contrary, religion and virtue, when carried to an extraordinary pitch of excellence, have generally exposed the possessors of them to the slanders of malevolence, and the rigors of persecution.

The

The situation of M. de la Fléchère, with respect to the unworthy part of his parishioners, was similar to the situation of Daniel, with respect to the Babylonish courtiers: his whole conduct was so admirably regulated by circumspection and prudence, that malice itself could find no occasion against him, *except concerning the Law of his God*. The voluptuary detested his temperance and self denial; the man of pride poured contempt upon his humility and condescension; the licentious were offended at his gravity and strictness; and the formal were roused to indignation by that spirit of zeal and devotion, which influenced his whole conversation and conduct. All of these, however they might differ among themselves, were leagued together as the inveterate enemies of this venerable pastor. They wrested his words, they misrepresented his actions, and *cast out his name as evil*. But, whatever he was called to suffer from the malice and opposition of his enemies, he endured it all with the utmost magnanimity and composure, *not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing*. While some indignant professors are ready, with James and John, to *command fire from Heaven* for the destruction of their opposers; and while others are enquiring, with Peter, how often they are to meet their offending brethren with unfeigned forgiveness, he gave himself an example of that uncommon charity, which *suffereth long and is kind; which is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil*. *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously,*

Whether

Whether he was insulted in his person, or injured in his property ; whether he was attacked with open abuse, or pursued by secret calumny ; through the testimony of a good conscience, he walked amid the most violent assaults of his enemies, as a man completely invulnerable ; and while his firmness discovered, that he was unhurt, his forbearance testified, that he was unoffended. His love was truly unconquerable : the cold waters of disrespect could not *quench it*, neither could floods of reproach *drown it*. *Being reviled, he blessed ; being persecuted, he suffered it ; being defamed, he entreated ; provoking his enemies, by every affectionate method, to love and good works.* Whenever he discerned a virtue, in the character of an adversary, he commended it, he magnified it, he rejoiced over it, and endeavoured to make it a medium of reconciliation. Whenever he discovered an enemy in distress, he hastened to meet him with tokens of generosity and kindness—*if he hungered, he fed him ; if he thirsted, he gave him drink ; if he was oppressed, he maintained his cause ; if his heart was brought down through heaviness, he endeavoured to support and console him ; embracing, with thankfulness, every possible opportunity of heap- ing coals of fire upon his head.*

It would be unpardonable in me to close this note, without observing, that the invincible love of this charitable pastor was honored with many happy triumphs over the prejudice and malignity of his opposers. The labors of his condescending affection were successful in a variety of instances. He outlived the persecuting spirit of his principal enemies, and

and saw many, who had withstood the vehemence of his zeal, entirely melted down with the fervor of his love. The most liberal of his opposers became his steady adherents, and the most stubborn of his adversaries were constrained to bear unwilling testimony to the christian superiority of his character.

T R A I T X I X.

*HIS LOVE TO THOSE, WHOM HE KNEW
ONLY BY REPORT.*

THOUGH the true minister takes a peculiar interest in every thing, that concerns the salvation of his countrymen, yet his christian benevolence is far from being confined within the narrow limits of a particular country. He desires to bear the name of his Savior to the ends of the earth; and if he is not able to do this by his personal addresses, he will do it, at least, by his earnest wishes and his constant prayers. If providence has not yet fixed him in a particular church, he writes, in the manner of St. Paul, to the inhabitants of the most distant countries—*I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that I consider myself as a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and the unwise. And, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel.*

Gospel to you, that are at Rome, where error and impiety have fixed their throne. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ : for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one, that believeth (a). If he writes to stranger-converts, whose faith is publicly spoken of in the world, he declares his sincere attachment to them, and his longing desire to afford them every spiritual assistance, in terms like these—*God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers. Making request, if by any means, I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God, to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established : that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me* (b).

If the Apostle Paul, when he knew the Romans no otherwise than by report, expressed so ardent a desire to see them, for the sole purpose of inciting them to seek after higher degrees of faith and piety; what must be the disposition of those ministers, who feel no desires of this nature even for the members of their own flock? And in how great an error are those christians, who frequently assemble together, either in their own houses, or in more public places, for the very purpose of mutually forgetting the restraints of piety, losing their time in frivolous conversation, and debasing their

(a) Rom. i. 13—16.

(b) Rom. i. 9—12.

their minds by puerile amusements ! Further : If the new nature of the regenerate excites in them that lively concern for the salvation of their neighbours, which St. Paul expressed for the salvation of those, who inhabited the remotest parts of the earth, is it becoming in the faithful to stifle the motions of that commendable zeal, which christian charity alone can inspire ? And if there are to be found among us dignified teachers, who, far from seconding a zeal so necessary in our day, are rather disposed to extinguish the first sparks of it, wherever they are discernible ; whom may they be said to take for their model, Paul the Apostle, or Saul the Pharisee ? doubtless Saul, the agent of a bigoted sect, and the open persecutor of the faithful.

NOTE XIX.

WHILE M. de la Fléchère was attached in an extraordinary manner to those, among whom he was appointed to labor, his heart was uncommonly enlarged toward all the children of God, by whatever name they were distinguished, or wherever the bounds of their habitation were fixed. Considering himself as a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, he was ready, had it been possible, to have visited the uttermost parts of the earth with the truths of the Gospel : and wherever a christian church was established, he appeared deeply interested in its welfare, expressing

expressing a vehement desire, that it might be regulated in all things as the *house of God*, and become to happy thousands the *gate of Heaven*. When the members of any distant church were represented, as exemplary for their faith, their zeal, or their love, he received the report of their advancement in grace with demonstrations of the sincerest joy, and publicly expressed his gratitude to that great Master of assemblies, *who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants*. When the professors of christianity, in any part of the world, were observed to grow weary of well-doing, either declining from *the faith of the Gospel*, or neglecting to walk worthy of their high vocation; his heart was penetrated, on their account, with the most lively concern; he lamented their instability in secret, and *watered his couch with his tears*. When the spiritual vine, in some remote part of the vineyard, appeared to be in danger from the fury of the oppressor, when her hedges were broken down and her fruit torn away by the hand of persecution, he entered deeply into the distresses of the suffering church; he fasted, he wept, he prayed, making continual intercession before the great Lord of the vineyard, that he would look down from Heaven, and visit the plant, which he had formerly strengthened for himself, that spreading forth its boughs again unto the sea, and its branches unto the river, the hills might be covered with the shadow of it, and the land be filled with its fruits.

Sympathy, however, was not the only proof of his love toward those, whom he knew merely by report: that love was frequently testified by his affectionate

affectionate counsel, and, whenever it was practicable, by his personal assistance. Passing some years ago through the south of France, he expressed a longing desire to visit the protestants in the Sevens mountains, whose fathers had suffered so greatly in the cause of godliness. To converse with the children of those, who had laid down their lives in defence of the truth, was a privilege not to be despised by a man, who never lost an opportunity of conversing with a righteous person, without lamenting it as a real misfortune. Though the journey was long and difficult, yet no argument could prevail with him to give up his resolution of attempting it on foot. "Shall I," said he to his friend, "make a visit on horseback, and at ease, to those poor cottagers, whose fathers were hunted along yonder rocks like partridges upon the mountains? No; in order to secure a more friendly reception among them, I will visit them under the plainest appearance, and with my staff in my hand." Accordingly he set out alone on this christian expedition, and after travelling till it was nearly dark he came to a small house, where he requested the favor of sitting up in a chair till the morning. It was not without some hesitation that the master of the cottage consented to receive him; after which he immediately entered into discourse with his host and his wife, who were so much charmed with the conversation and manners of their guest, that they considered the richest provisions their house could afford, as too mean to be set before him. After a hasty repast, the conversation was continued on the

part

part of M. de la Fléchère, and attended to by the children, as well as by their parents, with a degree of eagerness, which discovered their desire after religious instruction. Before they retired to rest, prayer was proposed: and while this holy man was engaged in pouring out his fervent supplication before God, the family around him were uncommonly affected, melted into tears, and filled with holy admiration. Early on the morrow, while he repeated his exhortations and renewed his prayers, he was listened to with the same veneration and earnestness: when, taking an affectionate leave of the family, he left the whole household in a state of astonishment and concern. This little relation was taken from the poor man himself, who immediately gave it out among his neighbours, that he had nearly refused to admit a stranger into his house, who proved to be rather an angel than a man. This family was of the Romish church.

Continuing his journey M. de la Fléchère reached a little town, where he was entertained by a pious minister, to whom he had been recommended. Here he was received by the serious protestants with open arms, among whom he exercised his ministry with much freedom and success. He conversed with their elders, he admonished their youth, he visited their sick, diligently exhorting and instructing them from house to house, while many among them were comforted, and many built up in their most holy faith. In the course of his progress through these mountains, he put up at a little house, where his landlord was one of those persons, who seldom utter a word unaccompanied

accompanied by an oath. Our benevolent traveller addressed this unthinking creature in his usual pointed and pathetic manner; and not without effect. His heart was deeply penetrated with the deserved rebuke, he confessed his error, and expressed a serious concern for the irregularity and profaneness of his past conduct. M. de la Fléchère had many opportunities in this family for the pious exercises of admonition and prayer: and from the time of his sojourning among them, an uncommon reformation was apparent in the conversation and manners of his host. It has since appeared, that the solemn exhortations, he received during this season, were attended with so extraordinary an effect upon this poor man, that if on any future occasion he discovered an unholy warmth in his temper, nothing more was necessary to produce an immediate calm in his mind, than the bare recollection of that venerable stranger who had once lodged beneath his roof.

This tedious journey (of which a much more circumstantial account might be given) while it evinced the love of this indefatigable pastor to those, whom he knew only by report, was productive of the happiest consequences to those, who attended his ministry upon this occasion, and, especially, to those, who entertained him in their families.

T R A I T XX.

HIS CHARITY TOWARDS THE POOR IN
GIVING, OR PROCURING FOR THEM
TEMPORAL RELIEF.

THOUGH our Lord came principally to save the *souls* of sinners, yet he was by no means unmindful of their *bodies*. He went about doing good, in the most unlimited sense, daily relieving, with equal care, the corporeal and spiritual maladies of the people. Thus when he had distributed the word of God to those, who were hungering and thirsting after righteousness, he expressed an anxious concern for the support of those among his followers, who were sensible of no other wants, except such as were of a temporal nature : *I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat*—and not content with barely expressing his concern for their corporeal necessities, he wrought an astonishing miracle for their immediate relief (a). The true minister cheerfully imitates the conduct of his gracious Master, by a strict and affectionate attention to the spiritual, and temporal wants of his people. *James, Cephas, and John, saith St. Paul, gave to me and*

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Barnabas

(a) Mark viii. 2.

Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen : only they would, that we should remember the poor ; the same which I also was forward to do (b).

When the liberality of St. Paul toward his necessitous brethren was restrained by his own excessive indigence, he employed the most effectual means to procure for them the generous benefactions of their wealthier companions in the faith of the Gospel. The following passages extracted from his epistles may serve as sufficient proofs of this. *Brethren, I cannot but inform you of the grace of God, bestowed on the churches of Macedonia ; how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves ; praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints—Therefore as ye abound in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. Wherefore shew ye, before the churches, the*
proof

proof of our love, and of our boasting on your behalf (c).

Not yet content with these earnest solicitations in behalf of the poor, the Apostle thus proceeds to enforce his importunities. *I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they should go before unto you, and make up before-hand your bounty, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. But this I say, he, that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he, that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: as it is written, he hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: that ye may be enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God: while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men (d).*

Who could possibly refuse any thing to a godly minister pleading the cause of the

I 2

poor

(c) 2 Cor. viii. 1—24.

(d) 2 Cor. ix 5—13.

poor, with all this apostolic dignity, simplicity, and zeal?

After having obtained alms for the poor, the Apostle Paul cautiously avoided all suspicion of appropriating any part of them to the relief of his own necessities; and was equally careful, that they were never misemployed through the unfaithfulness of those, who were appointed to distribute them. One of our brethren, adds the Apostle, *chosen of the churches* accompanies us in our journey with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance, which is administered by us: providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men (e). Mentioning again his favorite employment, he writes to a distant church—*Now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints, which are at Jerusalem. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. Now I beseech you, brethren, that ye strive together in your prayers for me, that I may be delivered from them, that do not believe in Judea; and that the service, which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints* (f).

Thus to wait upon the churches, and particularly

(e) 2 Cor. viii. 19—21.

(f) Rom. xv. 25—31.

larly thus to attend upon the poor, is to merit the name of a faithful minister.

NOTE XX.

AS the parish of Madeley was uncommonly populous, so it abounded with persons, who, either through infirmity or misfortune, were reduced to a state of indigence and distress. Over this despised and destitute part of his flock M. de la Flèche was accustomed to watch with unusual attention and concern. He regarded them as his peculiar charge, and exerted himself to the utmost for their encouragement and support. Not content with freely offering them the consolations of the Gospel, he contributed largely to the relief of their temporal necessities, and generally divided among them the greater part of his income. He sought them out with the most industrious care, and expressed a great degree of thankfulness to any person, who would direct him to the abodes of wretchedness and poverty. To such abodes, indeed, he was seldom a stranger, nor could any consideration prevail with him to pass them by, without attempting to dry up the tears, and supply the wants of their afflicted inhabitants. His daily walks were among the fatherless and the widows, the friendless and the oppressed: and while he counted it his indispensable duty to labor for their relief, he considered that very labor, as one of the sublimest pleasures, he was capable of enjoying.

The profusion of his charity toward the poor and needy is scarcely credible: it constantly exhausted his purse, it frequently unfurnished his house, and sometimes left him destitute of the most common necessaries. He was accustomed to make an exchange of state with his indigent brethren, freely bartering his ease for their woe, and his plenty for their penury. That he might feed the hungry, he led a life of abstinence and self-denial; that he might cover the naked, he clothed himself in the most homely attire; and that he might cherish such as were perishing in a state of extreme distress, he submitted to hardships of a very trying nature. But it is impossible to declare in how many ways he discovered his tenderness toward the friendless, and to how many inconveniences he cheerfully exposed himself for the alleviation of their various distresses. He followed them to the most secret scenes of their wretchedness, and in all their afflictions he was afflicted; he literally bore their several burdens, and freely drank of their sorrowful cup, that he might make room in it for a mixture of consolation and joy. *He was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; he was a father to the poor, and a friend to him, that had no helper; the blessing of such, as were ready to perish, came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.*

Such was the attention of this compassionate pastor to the necessitous among his people, and such was the liberality, which he exercised toward them to the close of his life, when a concern for their welfare accompanied him to his death-bed, where he tenderly bewailed their distresses,

treffes, and earnestly recommended them to the favor of that God, who hath promised, *that the poor shall not always be forgotten.*

T R A I T X X I.

*HIS CHARITY TOWARD SINNERS IN
OFFERING THEM EVERY SPIRITUAL
ASSISTANCE.*

TO solicit alms for those, who are destitute of food and raiment, and at the same time to withhold the word of God from those, *who hunger and thirst after righteousness*, is to manifest an unhappy inconsistency of character. Such inconsistencies, however, are frequently discoverable, even among pastors, who pique themselves upon their disposition to works of benevolence and charity.

Man has an immortal soul. This soul, which is properly himself, is rendered, by sin so totally ignorant and so completely miserable, that she seeks to enrich herself with the vanities of the world, and to gratify her inclinations with the pollutions of sin. In pity to the soul in this state of wretchedness, the truths of the Gospel are proposed by a compassionate God, as a sacred remedy adapted to the nature of her innumerable wants: they illumine the blind with spiritual light

and knowledge; they clothe the naked with the robe of righteousness; they feed the hungry; they heal the sick; they burst the captive's bands; they give eternal life to those, who are dead in trespasses and sin: in a word, they make us partakers of the great salvation of God. To pub-

lish this Gospel then, or to procure the preaching of it to sinners, is undoubtedly to give them an important proof of the most excellent charity: while, on the other hand, to refuse them the word of God, or to avoid any occasion of administering it, is absolutely or occasionally to deny them those spiritual alms and assistances, which the Savior of the world has appointed for their daily relief.

The pastor, who acts in this unbecoming manner, resembles a physician, or an almoner, who, having received a charge from his prince to supply the poor with food, or the sick with medicine, not only refuses to acquit himself of his acknowledged duty with diligence and impartiality, but strenuously opposes those, who endeavour to supply his lack of service. Such a minister seems to maintain a system as absurd and cruel, as would be that of either of those characters just alluded to, who should pretend, that no one had authority to administer alms to the poor, or medicine to the sick, except such as received pensions from the prince for that purpose; and that even these would act in a disorderly manner, if they should dare to dis-

distribute alms or remedies except on the sabbath day, and then only during particular hours.

So long as any pastor seeks his own glory, so long he will be subject to some degree of that contemptible jealousy, which will not suffer him to behold with pleasure the more abundant and successful labors of his brethren. But, the faithful minister of Christ, whose chief desire is the prosperity of the church, is actuated by a totally different spirit. Though he has a peculiar satisfaction in beholding the success of his own spiritual labors; yet, when he hears the Gospel published by others, and even by such as are apparently influenced by unworthy motives, he greatly rejoices in their success. His charity, which neither envies another's prosperity, nor seeks his own particular advantage, expresses itself, upon so delicate a subject, in the language of St. Paul—*Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to my bands. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice* (a).

Influenced by envy, or rendered insensible by their lukewarmness, worldly ministers are absolute strangers to the generous pleasure here mentioned by the Apostle; nor have they the least idea of acting in a criminal manner, when they will not permit the truths of the Gospel to be freely declared by all, who are disposed to announce them.

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(a) Phil. 1, 15—18.

The good pastor, by whatever name he may be distinguished, lives only to publish the Gospel, and to convert the souls committed to his charge : to restrain him then from attending to these important labors, is to force him aside from the true end of his calling, and must appear to every enlightened mind a greater act of cruelty, than to withhold the rich from giving alms, or to detain an expert swimmer from saving his drowning brethren. If such a pastor, in any period of his life, has acted like a monopolist of the Gospel, and, by denying to the *poor in spirit*, what was freely given for their support, has caused in any place a *famine of the word* ; he believes himself abundantly more culpable than those avaritious merchants, who, by forming a monopoly of grain in the East Indies, caused a grievous famine in that country, by which an innumerable multitude of its inhabitants perished. Those covetous men denied to the bodies of their neighbours a perishable nourishment ; but he has withheld from the souls of his brethren that precious manna, which might have preserved them to everlasting life. Such was the crime of those, whom our Lord addressed in the following words—*Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites ! for ye shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men : for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them, that are entering, to go in (b).* Observe St. Paul's sentiments of such characters. With respect to those Jews, who both killed the

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Lord Jesus, and their own Prophets, and have persecuted us; they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved; filling up by this means the measure of their sin: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost (c).

If the character, which the Apostle here describes was odious in a jew, without doubt it is more so in a christian, and still doubly detestable in a minister of the Gospel, whose heart should continually be animated with a fervent desire for the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of all mankind. Was it possible for those who are distinguished by this trait of the character of Antichrist to discover the turpitude of their own conduct, they would acknowledge themselves abundantly more guilty than the robber, who should force away from a famished pauper the morsel of bread he had begged in his distress. They would pronounce, without any hesitation, that the foster-mother, who neglects the infant she has undertaken to cherish, and prevents her charitable neighbours from affording it any nourishment, is still more excusable than the pastor, who, not content with refusing to feed the flock of Christ, endeavours to scatter his sheep, wherever they are found feeding, seeking out accusations against those, who have led them to a refreshing pasture, and studying by every means to withdraw

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the Gospel from those penitent sinners, who, *as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby* (d).

Happy will be the age, in which christian pastors shall no longer be found, like the Scribes in the days of St. Paul, laboring to fill up the measure of their iniquities ! Then truth and piety shall no longer be restrained by the fetters of prejudice and bigotry ! Then the faithful shall worship God, and publish the Gospel, with as much freedom, as the dissipated indulge themselves in the sports of the age, or the malevolent in slandering their neighbours !

NOTE XXI.

THE concern, which M. de la Fléchère expressed for the relief of the unfortunate and afflicted, was truly uncommon ; but his compassion was still more abundant toward the immoral and profane, whom he regarded as the most miserable of men. While he detested vice, he pitied the vicious ; and while he fled from sin, as from the face of a serpent, he turned to the sinner with the warmest emotions of benevolence and charity. Considering the wicked as poor beyond the power of expression, he joyfully presented them with *the pearl of great price*. He saw them wandering as sheep without a shepherd, and endeavoured to conduct them to the fold of God : he beheld them attempting to quench their thirst at the
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(d) 1 Pet. ii. 2.

poisoned streams of worldly pleasure, and affectionately invited them to *the fountain of living waters*: he saw them heedlessly rushing to the gates of death, and labored to turn their feet into *the way everlast-*
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Animated with that burning charity, by which St. Paul was impelled to publish the Gospel from nation to nation, this evangelical preacher was constrained, not only within but beyond the limits of his parish, to follow after the ignorant, the careless, and the abandoned, *warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.* Considering the business, with which he was charged, as an employment of the highest importance, without paying any servile attention to times or places, he lost no opportunity of executing the commission he had received. His highest wish was to *convert the wicked from the error of his way*; and, in the course of so arduous an undertaking, he was prepared, at the command of his Lord, to go forth into the high-ways and hedges with the invitations of the Gospel; anxious to do *the work of an evangelist* with all possible fidelity, and not ashamed, that every hour and every place should bear testimony to the affectionate zeal, with which he labored for the welfare of the church. As the miser toils to increase his hoards, and as the ambitious person studies to advance his reputation in the world, with equal assiduity and desire this holy man endeavoured to promote the reformation of the ungodly. *Rising up early and late taking rest,* he was employed, either directly or indirectly, through the whole of the day, in hiring laborers
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into the service of his Lord. To engage their attention and excite their desire, he set before them the freedom of that service, the honors that attend it, and the rewards that follow it: to strengthen their feeble resolution, he joyfully offered them every brotherly assistance; and to shame their inactivity, he pointed them to the example of those, who cheerfully bore all *the burden and heat of the day*. As an affectionate father conducts himself toward his disobedient children, reproving and alluring, admonishing and persuading them, with every affecting testimony of parental tenderness; so this spiritual father conducted himself toward the children of transgression and impiety, seeking, by every affectionate method, to engage them in the pursuit of *that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*.

With respect to individuals, he was peculiarly careful to choose the fittest opportunities of conversing with them upon sacred subjects. In the day of their prosperity, he sometimes spake to them, as it were, at a distance; but in the day of their adversity, he redoubled his efforts and followed them with the most familiar attention; fully persuaded, that religious impressions can never be made in a more favorable season, than when the heart has been softened by previous afflicting providences. Were they destitute of spiritual knowledge—he explained to them the mysteries of evangelical truth: were they presuming upon the mercy, they had formerly abused—he awakened their fears by representations of that righteous *wrath, which is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness*: were they doubtful
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of ever finding acceptance with God — he animated their hopes, and encouraged them to a steady dependence upon the promises of God; happily adapting his several applications to the circumstances of his spiritual patients.

Such was the ardent charity of this father in Christ toward the depraved and unbelieving, wherever he discovered them; a charity, which was frequently no less effectual in its operations than powerful in its essence. A number of instances might here be produced, in which the efforts of his love were crowned with success. But without selecting examples from among such a cloud of witnesses, as are to be found within the compass of his stated labors, I shall content myself with mentioning a particular instance of this kind, which occurred in the course of his travels on the Continent.

Meeting some years ago with a young Genoese, who was returning from Antibes to Genoa, M. de la Flèche, who was taking the same route, very courteously accepted the offer of his company. After a short conversation had taken place between them, our pious traveller was deeply afflicted to discover, that his companion had largely imbibed the sceptical notions of the day. Upon this discovery, he beheld the youth with a mixture of compassion and hope, secretly determining to improve the providence, which had cast this young stranger in his way, by attempting to lead him from the grossness of materialism to the spirituality of the Gospel. As they were detained several days at Monacho by contrary winds, he thankfully embraced this favorable opportunity

opportunity of conversing with his fellow-traveller, in the freest and most affectionate manner. At first the young man maintained his own sentiments with a great degree of warmth, and with a strong persuasion, that every attempt to refute them would be ineffectual: but, in the course of a few hours, he was unexpectedly staggered by the forcible arguments of his wiser opponent. At the end of two days debate, he frankly acknowledged himself vanquished, and expressed a desire, that the controversy might be turned into a liberal enquiry respecting the nature of revealed religion. Here M. de la Fléchère entered upon a part of his province, to which he was always especially disposed, explaining the scriptures in a manner peculiar to himself, equally intelligible and sublime, leading on his astonished companion from mystery to mystery, and opening before him an unbounded prospect of grace and glory. The young man was struck with the masterly skill, and affected with the more than parental concern of his instructor. He looked up to him with reverence, and listened to him with admiration: and still, the longer he attended to his discourse, the more he was athirst for information, renewing the sacred subject, with little intermission, from morning to night. At length, he was constrained to acknowledge the natural depravity and darkness of his mind, bewailing his former inattention to the most momentous concerns, and lamenting, with many tears, that he had wandered so long without the help of an experienced guide, to extricate him from the mazes of delusion and error. From this time, he desired

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to be present at morning and evening prayer, on which occasions M. de la Fléchère was careful to expound some portion of scripture peculiarly adapted to his circumstances: and during the continuance of these devotional exercises, such was the solemn attention and deportment of this altered youth, that a stranger would have supposed him a student of deep experience in the school of Christ. These religious impressions were not only continued, but deepened, from day to day, till their arrival at Genoa; when M. de la Fléchère had the satisfaction of observing in the character of his amiable companion every apparent token of a real and permanent change. During M. de la Fléchère's continuance at this place, he had frequent opportunities of conversing with his new acquaintance, from whom he received many testimonies of affectionate regard, and whom he endeavoured to establish in the faith of the Gospel. He gave him such directions and warnings, as were suited to his state. He exhorted him to search the scriptures, and to continue instant in prayer. He set before him the trials and difficulties, which would probably attend his spiritual progress, together with the advantages and consolations which must necessarily accompany a religious life. He guarded him against the devices of an ensnaring world, and pointed out the vanity of its richest gifts—how transient its smiles, how trifling its honors, how uncertain its riches, how inconstant its friendship, how feeble its supports—entreating him to mark it down in his memory, that the *friend of the world is the enemy of God*. And now, being called

called away from Genoa, after taking a most affectionate leave of his young disciple, and commending him to the grace of God in solemn prayer, *he went on his way rejoicing.*

T R A I T XXII.

THE ENGAGING CONDESCENSION OF HIS
HUMBLE CHARITY.

CHARITY avoids all appearance of haughtiness, and is never seen to act in an unbecoming manner. On the contrary, full of courtesy, she fears lest she should give offence to any; and, full of benevolence, she labors for the edification of all. Hence the charitable pastor cannot act otherwise than with a holy condescension towards all men, and especially toward the ignorant and poor, with whom the ministers of the present age will scarcely deign to converse: and, without ever slipping his foot into the pit of error, he sometimes approaches it, with a happy mixture of compassion and prudence, for the relief of those, who are unable to extricate themselves from it. *Though I am free from all men, writes St. Paul, yet I have made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: to them, that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them, that are without a written law. To*
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the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak : I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake (a). All things are lawful for me, continues he, but all things are not expedient : all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not (b). When ye sin against the brethren by wounding their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh, while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend (c). Whether therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved (d).

Behold that sweet prudence of charity, which our Lord recommended to his disciples, when he pointed out the folly of putting *new wine* into such bottles, as were unable to resist the force of the fermenting liquor. And of this affectionate discretion he himself gave them a striking example, when he said ; *I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.* If this condescending carriage was lovely in the blessed Jesus, it will ever appear amiable in his humble imitators, who can say, with the Apostle Paul, to the weaker members of the church : *We have fed you with milk, and not with meat ; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it* (e).

Special

(a) 1 Cor. ix. 19—23. (b) 1 Cor. x. 23. (c) 1 Cor. viii. 12, 13.

(d) 1 Cor. x. 32, 33. (e) 1 Cor. iii. 2.

Special care is, however, to be taken, that this charitable condescension may never betray the interests of truth and virtue. *Abstain, saith St. Paul, from all appearance of evil* (f). *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ* (g). *For herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men* (h). *And our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward, among whom we have labored in the Gospel* (i).

If there exist pastors, who lack this condescension towards the poor, or who are destitute of that humble charity, which can familiarize itself with the most ignorant, for their edification and comfort : if there are ministers to be found, who are ever meanly complaisant to the rich, and who are void of holy resolution in the presence of the great, instead of conducting themselves with that mingled humility and dignity, which are suitable to the character they sustain—may the one and the other be convinced of the grievous error, into which they are fallen, while they contemplate this opposite trait in the character of St. Paul.

Upon what consideration is founded the humiliating distinction, which is generally made between the

(f) 1 Thes. v. 22.

(g) 1 Cor. xi. 1.

(h) Acts xxiv. 16.

(i) 2 Cor. i. 12.

the rich and the poor? Was Christ manifested in a state of earthly grandeur? Did he not chiefly associate with the poor? Far from flattering the rich, did he not insinuate, that they would, with the utmost difficulty, enter into the Kingdom of God? Did he not affirm, it were better for a man to be cast into the sea with a mill-stone about his neck, than to offend the poorest believer? Did he not declare, that he would consider the regard shewn to the meanest of his followers, as though he himself had been the immediate object of it? When St. James assures us, that *he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way* performs the best of all possible good works, because, by preventing a multitude of sins, he places the soul in the road to every virtue—can this declaration be supposed to lose any of its force, when applied to the soul of a poor man? Are not the lowest of men immortal as the most elevated? Did not Christ humble himself to the death of the cross for the poor, as well as the rich? *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom?* And, finally, were the angels less ready to convey the soul of perishing Lazarus to Paradise, than that of wealthy Abraham? Perish then for ever that unchristian prejudice, which dishonors the poor, nourishes the Pride of the rich, and leads us to the violation of that great command, by which we become as guilty, as though we had transgressed the whole Law, the spirit of which

which is love. And let us remember, it is only out of the ruins of so despicable a partiality, that the *engaging condescension*, of which St. Paul has left us so lovely an example, can possibly be produced.

T R A I T XXIII.

HIS COURAGE IN DEFENCE OF OPPRESSED TRUTH.

CHARITY *rejoiceth in the Truth* (a).

These two amiable companions are closely united together, and mutually sustain each other. It is possible, however, when an error has the suffrages of many persons respectable on account of their wisdom, their age, their rank, their labors, or their piety, that a sincere christian may be tempted to sacrifice truth to authority, or rather to a mistaken charity. But the enlightened pastor, putting on the resolution of St. Paul, will never suffer himself to be imposed upon by the appearance either of persons, or things: and though he should see himself standing alone on the side of evangelical truths, he will not fear, even singly, to act as their modest and zealous defender.

In these circumstances a luke-warm minister
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(a) 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

loses all his courage. Behold his general plea for the pusillanimity of his conduct—‘I am alone, and what success can I expect in so difficult an undertaking? The partisans of this error are persons, whom I both love and honor. Some of them have shewn me great kindness, and others have sufficient credit to prejudice the world against me. Moreover, it would be looked upon as presumption in me, who am weaker than a reed, to oppose myself to a torrent, which bears down the strongest pillars of the church.’ Such is the manner, in which he apologizes for the timidity of his conduct in those situations, where his love of truth is publicly called to the test: not considering, that to reason thus, is to forget, at once, the omnipotence of God, the force of truth, and the unspeakable worth of those souls, which error may poison and destroy.

On the contrary, the faithful minister, who, on all occasions, rejoices in the truth, *conferring not with flesh and blood*, courageously refuses to bear the yoke of any error, that must evidently be accompanied with evil consequences. In the most trying situations of this nature he imitates the conduct of the great apostle, who, when he saw a shameful error making its way into the church, placed himself in the gap, and gave way to the emotions of his honest zeal, as related in the following passage:—*False brethren came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that*

that they might bring us into bondage. To whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you. And when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them, which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also, under the specious pretence of not offending his neighbour, was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw, that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, if thou being a jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews (b)?

This reasonable reprimand is, perhaps, one of the greatest proofs, which St. Paul ever gave of the uprightness of his intention, and the steadiness of his resolution.

Ye men of integrity! ye, who have proved how much it costs to defend the rights of truth, when it stands opposed to that deference, which condescending love obliges us to shew, in a thousand instances, to respectable authority; you alone are able to make a proper judgment of the holy violence, which was exercised by St. Paul upon this occasion. But whatever they may be called to endure, in so honorable a cause, happy are those
christians,

(b) Gal. ii. 4—14.

christians, and doubly happy those pastors, who have so great a love for truth, and so true a love for their brethren, that they are ready at all times, with this faithful apostle, to sacrifice to the interests of the Gospel, every inferior consideration, every servile fear, and every worldly hope.

NOTE XXII.

THOUGH truth has many professed admirers, yet she seldom finds a steady follower, and still less frequently a resolute defender. Without a solid understanding, an upright heart, and an unconquerable resolution, no man is properly qualified to maintain the rights of truth. He, that is void of understanding, will never discover the worth of truth; he, that is destitute of an upright heart, will feel but little attachment to truth, notwithstanding her worth; while he, that is of an irresolute temper, will rather desert her standard than suffer in her cause. Balaam was eminently distinguished by a spirit of discernment, but was destitute of an upright heart; Peter was possessed of an upright heart, but betrayed, on a memorable occasion, the want of an undaunted spirit: Saul the pharisee, though remarkable for his uprightness and resolution, was miserably defective with respect to spiritual discernment; while Paul the apostle, uniting in his character all these several qualifications, became a zealous and steady defender of truth.

It would be difficult to say,
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in which of these three qualifications M. de la Flèche principally excelled; so happily proportioned was his sincerity to his discernment, and the firmness of his resolution to the uprightness of his heart. Thus remarkably furnished for the service of truth, he engaged himself in her cause, with an extraordinary degree of activity and zeal, earnestly desiring to see the uttermost parts of the earth illuminated with her beams, and the inhabitants of every country submitting to her authority. Wherever he came, he exalted her honors and bore testimony to her matchless worth, making mention of *her ways*, as *ways of pleasantness*, and commending *her paths*, as *paths of peace*. Whenever he saw spiritual truth triumphant, he rejoiced at the sight, *as one that findeth great spoil*: when he beheld her despised and rejected, he cheerfully shared her disgrace and suffered in her cause. If her excellencies were at any time obscured by the misconceptions of the ignorant, he endeavoured to dissipate that obscurity, and exhibit her to the world in all her native lustre. If he saw her assaulted, he voluntarily exposed himself to danger in her defence: and whether the attack was made by mistaken friends, or inveterate enemies, he opposed it, as a man wholly proof against the undue influence of prejudice or interest, resentment or respect. In all his struggles for truth, he contended with confidence, but without obstinacy; with zeal, but not with bitterness; *in meekness instructing those that opposed themselves, if God peradventure might give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth*. If the error he discovered was merely of
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a circumstantial nature, he pursued it with less severity; but if it was a fundamental error, he opposed it with a holy vehemence, giving it no quarter, till it was allowed, by the candid and impartial, to be absolutely untenable: in the mean time, making it abundantly manifest by his modest and courteous deportment, that he contended, not for the acquisition of victory, but for the exaltation of truth.

His ardent attachment to divine truth would not permit him to hear in silence the least insinuation, that might be thrown out to the disadvantage of christianity. And in some companies, he thought it necessary to call upon the avowed despisers of revelation, either to establish or retract the charges, they had exhibited against the religion of Jesus. In England he very rarely mixed with persons of an irreligious conversation; but in his passage through other countries, he was frequently obliged to associate with men of a character altogether opposite to his own. In Italy, France, and Holland, he has taken his seat with a steady composure among deists, socinians, and free-thinkers; and after vainly endeavouring, in the politest manner, to introduce a conversation respecting divine truth, has been often constrained to signify his desire of exchanging an argument, with any gentleman in company, on the subject of natural religion. As these offers were always made in the most graceful terms, they were frequently accepted in a becoming manner, when a conversation has usually taken place sufficiently interesting to excite the curiosity and engage

the attention of every person present. Upon every occasion of this nature, he appeared perfectly dispassionate and recollected, discovering an accurate acquaintance with every part of his subject, and never failing to foil his strongest antagonists upon their own ground. And in the close of every such debate, he was careful to recapitulate the principal arguments which had been advanced by either party, in the course of the contest, ascribing the victory he had obtained to the irresistible power of truth, and enumerating the special advantages of revealed, over natural, religion.

Some years ago, he met with a traveller on the Continent, who had adopted the sentiments of Voltaire with respect to the religion of Jesus, a man of much information and refinement, and a strenuous opposer of the christian faith. This gentleman no sooner understood that he was sitting in company with a zealous defender of scriptural truth, but, confiding in his own superiority, he carelessly threw out the gauntlet, by ridiculing the sentiments, which M. de la Fléchère maintained. Our pious traveller immediately accepted the challenge with a modest assurance, and the conversation between these two able disputants soon became serious. Every argument on either side was proposed with the greatest caution, and every proposition examined with the nicest accuracy. After the contest had continued for several hours together, the gentleman grew impatient at his want of success; while his calmer opponent confuted and exposed the tenets, he had vainly endeavoured to maintain.

This debate

debate was continued by adjournment for the space of a week : and during this season, whatever had been said upon the subject, by the most celebrated writers, was regularly brought forward and thoroughly canvassed. M. de la Fléchère repeatedly overcame his antagonist, whose arguments became more languid and ineffectual toward the close of the debate, and who regularly lost his temper and his cause together. In the course of this controversy, M. de la Fléchère, took a view of the christian's enviable life, his consolation in trouble, and his tranquillity in danger, together with his absolute superiority to all the evils of life and the horrors of death ; interspersing his remarks with many affectionate admonitions and powerful persuasives to a rational dependence upon the truths of the Gospel.

Such was the conclusion of this memorable debate, in the course of which the unsuccessful disputant conceived so exalted an idea of his opponent's character, that he never afterwards mentioned his name, but with peculiar veneration and regard. - And, as a proof that this regard was unfeigned, meeting with M. de la Fléchère about eight years afterwards in Provence, where he lived in affluence and ease, he shewed him every possible civility, entertaining him at his own house in the most hospitable manner, and listening to his conversation on spiritual subjects with all imaginable attention and respect.

Such was the manner, in which M. de la Fléchère acquitted himself in the defence of oppressed truth : and whether his efforts were successful or not, he left behind him, in every place, sufficient proofs of the

acuteness, resolution, and constancy, with which he exerted himself in her cause.

T R A I T XXIV.

HIS PRUDENCE IN FRUSTRATING THE DESIGNS OF HIS ENEMIES.

THERE is no kind of calumny, which the incredulous have not advanced, in order to render christianity either odious, or contemptible. According to the notions of these men, to adopt the maxims of evangelical patience, argues a want of sensibility; and to regulate our conduct, according to the dictates of christian prudence, is to act the hypocrite. What we have to say, in this place, will chiefly respect the latter charge.

It has been asserted by modern infidels, that the gentleness and forbearance, which the Gospel requires of its professors, must necessarily make them the dupes of designing men, and lead them unreluctantly into the snares of their persecutors. But to draw this inference from some few passages of scripture, understood in too literal a sense, is to set truth at variance with itself, merely for the purpose of charging christians with all the evil, which, it is presumed, they

they might have avoided by prudence, or have overcome by resolution. The example of our Lord, and that of St. Paul, might have rectified the ideas of cavillers upon this point. When Christ exhorted his disciples to be *harmless as doves*, he admonished them at the same time to be *wise as serpents*: and of this harmless wisdom he himself gave a striking example, when he was interrogated by the Jews, respecting the lawfulness of paying tribute unto Cesar. Well acquainted with the different sentiments of that people, with regard to the Roman yoke, without directly combating the prejudices of any party, he returned a satisfactory answer to all parties, by an inference drawn from *the image and superscription borne upon their current coin* — *Render therefore unto Cesar the things, that are Cesar's, and unto God the things, that are God's* (a).

The sincere christian, and the faithful minister, have frequent occasion for this happy prudence, as well as St. Paul, who, more than once, employed it with success. The Jews, irritated against this apostle, sought occasion to destroy him, on account of the zeal, with which he published the Gospel among the Gentiles. Hoping to soften the prejudices, they entertained against his conduct, he recounted to them, how Jesus, being raised from the dead and appearing to him in an extraordinary manner, had expressly sent him

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(a) Matt. xxii. 21.

to the Gentiles (b) : when the Jews, more irritated than before, would have torn him in pieces, had he not been rescued out of their hands by the Roman garrison. By this means Paul was preserved for a more peaceful hearing. And on the morrow, when he stood before the Jewish council, perceiving that the assembly was composed, partly of sadducees, who say there is *no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit*; and partly of pharisees, who believe equally in the existence of spirits and the resurrection of the body; he immediately availed himself of this circumstance, and cried out—*Men and brethren, I am a pharisee, the son of a pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question* (c). As though he had said—The great cause of the violent persecution, that is now raised against me, is, that I preach *Jesus and the resurrection*. Our fathers, indeed, were not absolutely assured of a life to come; but the important doctrine of the resurrection, and of the judgment, that shall follow, is now demonstrated; since God has given an incontestible proof of it, in raising up his Son Jesus from the dead. And I myself have been an eye-witness of his resurrection, to whom he has appeared two several times, once as I journeyed to Damascus, and afterwards as I prayed in the Temple. But when I mentioned this second appearance of a risen Saviour, my incredulous

accusers

(b) Acts xxii. 21. (c) Acts xxiii. 6.

accusers began vehemently to cry out, *Away with such a fellow from the earth.*

By this just exposition of the fact, and by his prudent selection of *the resurrection of Christ* from among the other great doctrines of christianity, St. Paul happily caused a division to take place among his judges. And the event answered his expectation: for *the scribes, that were of the pharisees part, arose, saying; We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit, i. e. a man risen from the dead, or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God* (d).

There is still another instance of the wisdom of the serpent, reconciling itself with the innocence of the dove, in the conduct of this Apostle, when marking the disposition of his Athenian judges, he took advantage of their taste for novelty by announcing to them *The unknown God*, to whom they had already erected an altar (e).

This christian prudence, equally distant from the duplicity of hypocrites and the stupidity of idiots, merits a place among the traits which characterize this great Apostle, not only because it is worthy of our imitation, but also because it has been indirectly represented, by a modern Celfus, as mere cunning and artifice. The author here alluded to, who deserves rather to be called a great poet than a faithful painter, having disfigured this trait of St. Paul's character, with

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a pencil

(d) Acts xxiii. 9. (e) Acts xvii.

a pencil dipt in the gaul of prejudice; we gladly take this occasion of setting forth the injustice of his imputations, so illiberally cast both upon christianity itself, and the most eminent of its defenders. This witty philosopher, who has said so many good things against the spirit of persecution, never perceived, that he himself was actuated by an intolerant spirit: so true it is, that the most sagacious are liable to be blinded by passion or prejudice. The same spirit of persecution, which excited the Athenians to discountenance the justice of Aristides, as a dangerous singularity, and to punish the piety of Socrates, as a species of atheism, led the author of the philosophical dictionary to represent the prudence of St. Paul, as the duplicity of an hypocrite.

Had this severe judge occupied the seat of Ananias, he might perhaps, with an affected liberality, have overlooked the peculiarities of the Apostle's creed; but, in the end, his innate detestation of piety would have assisted him, according to the general custom of persecutors, to feign some just cause for treating him with the utmost rigor. And this he has done in our day, as far as his circumstances would permit; since, not being able to disgrace him by the hand of a public executioner, he has studied to do it with his pen, by ravishing from him, not only his reputation for extraordinary piety, but even his claim to common honesty.

Persecutor!

Persecutor! whoever thou art, be content that thy predecessors have taken away the lives of the righteous, and spare them what they prefer infinitely before life itself, *The testimony of a good conscience.*

T R A I T XXV.

*HIS TENDERNESS TOWARD OTHERS, AND
HIS SEVERITY TOWARD HIMSELF.*

THOUGH perfectly insensible to the warm emotions of brotherly love, the worldly pastor frequently repeats, in his public discourses, those affectionate expressions, which flow so cordially from the lips of faithful ministers, *My dear brethren in Christ!* These expressions from the pulpit are almost unavoidable, upon some occasions, but, in general, they are to be regarded in no other light than the civil addresses of a haughty person, who concludes his epistles by assuring his correspondents, that he considers it an honor to subscribe himself their obedient servant. But while the worldly minister affects a degree of benevolence, which he cannot feel, the good pastor, out of the abundance of a heart overflowing with christian charity, addresses his brethren with the utmost affection

and regard, not only without any danger of feigning what he has not experienced, but even without a possibility of expressing the ardor of his brotherly love. His exhortations to the faithful, like those of St. Paul, are seasoned with an unction of grace, and accompanied with a flow of tenderness, which frequently give them an astonishing effect upon his brethren, and which always evince the interest he takes in the concerns of the church. *Rebuke not an elder, says St. Paul, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity* (a). Such was the exhortation of this apostle to a young minister, nor was his example unsuitable to his counsel. *I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. Dearly beloved, be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good* (b). *I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you* (c). *I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called* (d). *If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, being of one accord. My beloved, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling* (e). *We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus,*

(a) 1 Tim. v. 1. (b) Rom. xii. 1, 19, 21. (c) 1 Cor. iv. 14.

(d) Eph. iv. 1. (e) Phil. ii. 1, 2, 12.

Jesus, that as ye have received of us, how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more (f). Though I might be much bold in Christ, to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: who in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me, whom I have sent again. Thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord (g). Such was the tenderness and affection, with which St. Paul was accustomed to address his believing brethren. But the language of this Apostle was very different when he spoke of himself, and of that body of sin, which constrained him to cry out, *O wretched man, that I am.*

It is the character of too many persons to be severe toward the failings of others, while they shew the utmost lenity toward themselves, with respect both to their infirmities and their vices. Always ready to place the faults of their neighbours in an odious light, and their own in the most favorable point of view, they seem to be made up of nothing, but partiality and self-love; while the true minister reserves his greatest indulgence for others, and exercises the greatest severity toward himself. *All things are lawful for me,*

(f) 1 Thess. iv. 1, (g) Philemon v. 8, 12, 20.

me, writes St. Paul, *but I will not be brought under the power of any* (h). *Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? And every one, that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things: now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away* (i).

One reflection naturally finishes this trait of the character of St. Paul. If this spiritual man, if this great Apostle, thought himself obliged to use such strenuous efforts, that he might not be rejected before God at the last; in how great danger are those careless pastors and christians, who, far from accustoming themselves to holy acts of self-denial, satisfy their natural desires, without any apprehension, and treat those as enthusiasts, who begin to imitate St. Paul, by regarding their baptismal vow, and renouncing their sensual appetites.

NOTE XXIII.

IT was observed to the disgrace of the ancient scribes, that they bound *heavy burdens* upon others, which they themselves refused to touch *with one of their*

(h) 1 Cor. vi, 12. (i) 1 Cor, ix, 24—27.

their fingers: and their uncharitable conduct in this respect was publicly condemned by the blessed Jesus, who pronounced the severest judgments upon their self-indulgence. Contrasted with the carriage of those illiberal pretenders to piety, the conduct of M. de la Flèche appeared in a truly admirable and exemplary point of view. Far from subjecting others to those hardships and restraints, which he refused to impose upon himself, he cheerfully endeavoured to lighten the burdens of his brethren, though it was by redoubling his own. He labored to quicken, and not to retard, the progress of the weak and unexperienced. He compassionated their defects, and made excuse for their constitutional infirmities, in the manner of his gracious Master, who kindly apologized for the inattention of his sleeping disciples. He studied to present the religion of Jesus in its most alluring form, not as a *vial of wrath*, but as a *cup of consolation*; not as a galling yoke, but as a sacred tie; not as a depressing burden, but as a never-failing support. When he beheld the incautious entangled in the mazes of temptation, he tenderly lamented the effects of their indiscretion; and instead of throwing unnecessary impediments in the way of their escape, he affectionately labored to break through the snare, and deliver the captive. If his brother was overtaken in a fault, he endeavoured to *restore him in the spirit of meekness*—if his conscience was wounded with a sense of sin, he hastened to meet him with healing remedies—if he was overwhelmed with the dread of his besetting sin, and harassed with the apprehension of future miscarriages,

miscarriages, he encouraged him to come *boldly to the throne of grace*, that he might *obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need*. In his whole deportment toward the ignorant and unfaithful, he copied the character of a skilful and affectionate preceptor, who keeps future difficulties as far removed as possible from the view of his pupils, accommodating their exercises to their several capacities, overlooking their past negligence, supplying their present deficiencies, and mentioning their poor attainments with commendation and praise.

But while his conduct toward others was marked with unusual lenity and tenderness, he exercised the strictest severity with regard to himself. He sought after an entire conformity to the *perfect will* of God. And to accelerate his progress toward this desirable state, he cheerfully renounced his natural habits, and resolutely opposed his own will, unweariedly laboring to bring *every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*. He struggled against the most innocent of his infirmities; he entered upon the most painful exercises; and refused to allow himself in the least temporary indulgencies, which were not perfectly consistent with a life of unfeigned mortification and self-denial. He engaged himself in every kind of spiritual labor with the most intense application, suffering no talent to remain unoccupied, nor any moment to pass by unimproved: and so perfectly was he inured to habits of Christian industry, that he never discovered an inclination to sweeten the most laborious exercises with those refreshments and relaxations, which he esteemed not only allowable, but,
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in some cases, necessary, to his weaker brethren. Considering himself, as a member of Christ's *militant* church, he complained of no hardships, nor thought any difficulty too great to be encountered, in the course of his warfare. He was careful to act, in every instance, consistently with his high profession; training himself up to spiritual *hardness* and activity, by a resolute attention to the strictest rules of christian discipline; preferring the path of duty before the lap of repose; neither listening to the suggestions of fear, nor regarding the dictates of worldly prudence; stifling even the necessary calls of nature, that he might follow, with less interruption, the leadings of grace; and, finally, *counting* neither ease, nor interest, nor reputation, nor even life itself *dear* to him, that he might *finish his course with joy*.

T R A I T XXVI.

*HIS LOVE NEVER DEGENERATED INTO
COWARDICE, BUT REPROVED AND CON-
SOLED AS OCCASION REQUIRED.*

THE charity of the true minister bears no resemblance to that phantom of a virtue, that mean complaisance, that unmanly pliancy, that unchristian cowardice, or that affected generosity, which the ministers of this day delight to honor with the name of charity. According to
these

these insufficient judges, to be charitable — is only to give some trifling alms out of our abundant superfluities, to tolerate the most dangerous errors, without daring to lift up the standard of truth, and to behold the overflowings of vice, without attempting to oppose the threatening torrent.

Such would be the mistaken charity of a surgeon, who, to spare the mortifying arm of his friend, should suffer the gangrene to spread over his whole body. Such was the charity of the high priest Eli toward Hophni and Phinehas; an impious charity, which permitted him to behold their shameful debaucheries with too favorable an eye; a fatal charity, which opened that abyss of evil, which finally swallowed them up, and into which they dragged with them their father, their children, the people of Israel, and the church, over which they had been appointed to preside.

The good pastor, conscious, that he shall save a soul from death, if he can but prevail with a sinner to forsake his evil way, uses every effort to accomplish so important a work. And among other probable means, which he employs on this occasion, he tries the force of severe reprehension, rebuking the wicked with a holy authority; and, if it be necessary, returning to the charge with a spark of that glowing zeal, with which his Master was influenced, when he forced from the temple those infamous buyers and sellers,

lers, who had profaned it with their carnal merchandize. Thus St. Paul, on receiving information, that scandalous errors had been discovered in the conduct of a member of the Corinthian church, immediately wrote to that church, in the following severe and solemn manner — *It is reported, that there is fornication among you. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he, that hath done this deed, might be taken away from among you. Know ye not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, and that the plague in any single member of a society is sufficient to infect the whole company? Purge out therefore the old leaven, and put away from among yourselves that wicked person. If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, keep not company with such a one, no not to eat. Be not deceived: fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Know ye not, that your bodies are the members of Christ? Flee fornication therefore, and avoid the company of fornicators. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. Further, I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already concerning the lascivious person, that is among you, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus (a).*

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When the true minister has passed the severest censures upon sinners, and beholds those censures attended with the desired effect, he turns to the persons he lately rebuked with testimonies of that unbounded charity, that *beareth all things* and *hopeth all things*. More ready, if possible, to relieve the dejected than to humble the presumptuous, after having manifested the courage of a lion, he puts on the gentleness of a lamb, consoling and encouraging the penitent offender, and never ceasing to intercede for him, till his pardon is obtained both from God and man. Thus St. Paul, who had so sharply rebuked the Corinthians in his first epistle, gave them abundant consolation in his second, and exhorted them to receive with kindness the person, whom he had before enjoined them to excommunicate. It is easy to recognize the tenderness of Christ in the following language of this benevolent Apostle.

I wrote unto you my first epistle out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love, which I have more abundantly unto you (b). Great is my glorying of you, I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. God, that comforteth them, that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus my messenger, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, and your fervent mind toward me. For though I
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(b) 2 Cor. ii. 4.

made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance. For ye were made sorry after a godly manner — For behold, what carefulness it wrought in you! what clearing of yourselves! what holy indignation! what fear! what vehement desire! what zeal! what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. Moreover, we were comforted in your comfort. Yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, and how you received him, together with my reproof, with fear and trembling. I rejoice therefore, that I have confidence in you in all things (c). And with respect to the person, who has caused us so much distress, Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that now ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love toward him. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: nay, I have already forgiven him, for your sakes, as in the presence of Christ (d).

Great GOD! appoint over thy flock vigilant, charitable, and courageous pastors, who may dis-

(c) 2 Cor. vii.

(d) 2 Cor. ii. 6—10.

discern the sinner through all his deceitful appearances, and separate him from thy peaceful fold, whether he be an unclean goat, or a ravenous wolf. Permit not thy ministers to confound the just with the unjust, rendering contemptible the most sacred mysteries, by admitting to them persons, with whom virtuous heathens would blush to converse. Touch the hearts of those pastors, who harden thy rebellious people, by holding out tokens of thy favor to those, who are the objects of thy wrath: and permit no longer the bread of life, which they carelessly distribute to all, who chuse to profane it, to become in their unhallowed hands the bread of death. Discover to them the impiety of offering their holy things to the dogs: and awaken in them a holy fear of becoming accomplices with those hypocritical monsters, who press into thy temple to crucify thy Son afresh; and who, by a constant profanation of the symbols of our holy faith, add to their other abominations the execrable act of eating and drinking their own damnation, and that with as much composure, as some among them swallow down the intoxicating draught, or utter the most impious blasphemies.

AN OBJECTION ANSWERED.

BEFORE we proceed to the consideration of another trait of the character of St. Paul, it will

will be necessary to refute an objection to which the preceding trait may appear liable. 'Dare you,' it may be asked, 'propose to us, as a model, a man, who could strike Elymas with blindness, and deliver up to Satan the body of a sinner?'

Answer. The excellent motive, and the happy success of the Apostle's conduct, in both these instances, entirely justify him. He considered affliction not only as the crucible, in which God is frequently pleased to purify the just, but as the last remedy to be employed for the restoration of obstinate sinners. Behold the reason, why the charity of the primitive church demanded, in behalf of God, that the rod should not be spared, when the impiety of men was no longer able to be restrained by gentler means; determining, that it was far better to be brought to repentance, even by the sharpest sufferings, than to live and die in a sinful state. To exercise this high degree of holy and charitable severity toward a sinner, was, in some mysterious manner, *to deliver up his body to Satan*, who was looked upon as the executioner of God's righteous vengeance in criminal cases—Thus Satan destroyed the first born of Egypt, smote the subjects of David with the pestilence, and cut off the vast army of Sennacherib. St. John has thrown some light upon this profound mystery, by

by asserting, *There is a sin unto death* (a) : and the case of Ahab is fully in point ; for when that king had committed this sin, a spirit of error received immediate orders to lead him forth to execution upon the plains of Ramoth-Gilead (b). This awful doctrine is further confirmed by St. Luke, when he relates, that in the same instant, when the people, in honor of Herod, *gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a God and not of a man ; the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory : and he was eaten up of worms, and gave up the ghost* (c). The punishment thus inflicted, by the immediate order of God, was always proportioned to the nature of the offence. If the sin was *not unto death*, it was followed by some temporary affliction, as in the cases of Elymas and the incestuous Corinthian. If the crime committed was of such a nature that the death of the sinner became necessary, either for the salvation of his soul, for the reparation of his crime, or to alarm those, who might probably be corrupted by his pernicious example, he was then either smitten with some incurable disease, as in the case of Herod ; or struck with immediate death, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, who sought to veil their hypocrisy with appearances of piety, and their double-dealing with a lie. Had M. Voltaire considered the christian church, as a well-regulated species of theocracy,

(a) 1 John v. 16. (b) 1 Kings xxii, 20, 22. (c) Acts xii. 22, 23.

theocracy, he would have seen the folly of his whole reasoning with respect to the authority of that church, in its primitive state. And convinced, that God has a much greater right to pronounce by his ministers a just sentence of corporeal punishment, and even death itself, than any temporal prince can claim to pronounce such sentence by his officers: that daring philosopher, instead of pointing his sarcasms against an institution so reasonable and holy, would have been constrained to tremble before the Judge of all the earth.

Finally. It is to be observed, that when this kind of jurisdiction was exercised in the church, the followers of Christ, not having any magistrates of their own religion, lived under the government of those heathenish rulers, who tolerated those very crimes, which were peculiarly offensive to the pure spirit of the Gospel. And on this account God was pleased to permit the most eminent among his people, on some extraordinary occasions, to exercise that terrible power, which humbled the offending church of Corinth, and overthrew the sorcerer Elymas in his wicked career.

If it be enquired—What would become of mankind, were the clergy of this day possessed of the extraordinary power of St. Paul? We answer—The terrible manner, in which St. Paul sometimes exercised the authority he had received, with respect to impenitent sin-

ners, is not left as an example to the ecclesiastics of the present day, unless they should come (which is almost impossible) into similar circumstances, and attain to equal degrees of discernment, faith, and charity, with this Apostle himself.

TRAIL XXVII.

HIS PERFECT DISINTERESTEDNESS.

IF charity seeketh not her own; and if it is required, that the conversation of the faithful should be without covetousness; it becomes the true minister, in an especial manner, to maintain an upright and disinterested conduct in the world.

Though it be true, that *they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar*; yet nothing is so detestable to the faithful pastor, as the idea of enriching himself with the sacred spoils of that altar. Observe how St. Paul expresses himself upon this subject. *We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Having, therefore, food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they, that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while*
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some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, who art set apart as a minister of the everlasting Gospel, flee these things : and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (a). With regard to myself, I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. Every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need (b). Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness ; God is witness. For ye remember our labor and travel, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you. Ye are our witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you, that believe (c). Behold the third time I am ready to come to you ; and I will not be burdensome to you ; for I seek not yours, but you : for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you (d).

Behold the disinterestedness of the faithful shepherd, who is ever less ready to receive food and clothing from the flock, than to labor for its protection and support ! Behold the spirit of Christ ! And let the pastor, who is influenced by a different spirit, draw that alarming inference from his state,

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which

(a) 1 Tim. vi. 7—11. (b) Phil. iv. 11, 12. (c) 1 Thess. ii. 5, 10.

(d) 2 Cor. xii. 14, 15.

which he is taught to do by the following expression of St. Paul: *If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his* (e).

Happy would be the christian church, were it blessed with disinterested pastors! Avaritious ministers, who are more taken up with the concerns of earth, than with the things of Heaven, who are more disposed to enrich their families, than to supply the necessities of the poor, who are more eager to multiply their benefices, or to augment their salaries, than to improve their talents, and encrease the number of the faithful—Such ministers, instead of benefiting the church, harden the impenitent, aggravate their own condemnation, and force infidels to believe, that the holy ministry is used, by the generality of its professors, as a comfortable means of securing to themselves the perishable bread, if not the fading honors, of the present life.

N O T E XXIV.

UPON his discovering the *goodly pearl* of evangelical truth, M. de la Fléchère, like the merchant in the Gospel, immediately bartered his all for the possession of so invaluable a gem. Till then, he had been engaged in pursuits of a worldly nature: but, from that time, he sought after no other treasure than the *unsearchable riches* of grace, nor desired any inheritance except that, which is reserved for

(e) Rom. viii. 9.

for the faints in everlasting light. Through every period of his religious life, he appeared as a pilgrim and stranger in the world, unallured by its smiles, unmoved by its frowns, and uninterested in its changes. His affections were wholly fixed upon things above; and while thousands and ten thousands were contending around him for the advantages and honors of the present life, he desired to pass unnoticed through its idle hurry, without being entangled in its concerns, or encumbered with its gifts. It was with him, as with a person engaged in a race, which must be attended with immense gain, or irreparable loss: he kept his eye immovably fixed upon the goal; and whatever gilded trifles were thrown in his way, he resolutely trampled on them all, uninterruptedly *pressing toward the mark for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus*. His mind was never distracted with a multiplicity of objects, nor did he ever mingle temporal expectations with eternal hopes. Considering one thing only as absolutely necessary to his happiness, while he pursued the substance, he rejected the shadow; and while he contended for an incorruptible crown, he had no ambition to appear in the fading garlands of earthly glory. Possessed of the faith, which *overcometh the world*, he beheld it with the feelings of his tempted Master; anxious for its good, but despising its yoke; prepared to labor in its service, but resolute to reject its rewards; deaf to its promises, blind to its prospects, and dead to its enjoyments.

He received, indeed, a part of his maintenance from the altar, at which he served: but so scanty was the income produced by his parish, that it scarcely sufficed, in some years, for the liberality of his contributions toward the relief of the poor. Yet so perfectly satisfied was he with his inconsiderable appointments at Madeley, that he desired nothing more than to conclude both his labors and his life, in that favored village. Had he been disposed to improve every favorable opportunity of advancing his temporal interests, he might have succeeded beyond many, who are anxiously plotting and contriving the means of their future promotion in the world. But, as a proof of his superiority to every allurements of this nature, he peremptorily refused, once and again, the offer of additional preferment. And, as a further testimony of his perfect disinterestedness, after having so far destroyed his health, by the excess of his labors, that he was obliged to retire for a season from his charge, he solemnly determined, in case of continued weakness, to give up together the profits and duties of his ministerial station.

I cannot here pass by an affecting instance of his disinterested disposition, which occurred a year or two before his decease. Mr. and Mrs. de la Flèche were earnestly requested by several serious persons at Dublin, to come over for a few weeks for the purpose of promoting the interests of religion in that city, by their godly exhortations and example. So long as civility or piety would suffer it, they declined the journey: but after being repeatedly urged to undertake

undertake it, at the united instances of a christian society, they judged it improper any longer to withhold their consent, lest, in disregarding the solicitations of a willing people, they should disobey the summons of God. Accordingly they accepted the invitation, and appeared for a season in another kingdom, as two burning and shining lights. A gentleman of Dublin, who enjoyed much of their company during this holy visit, writes as follows.

" I wish it were in my power to send you any anecdotes of our dear deceased friend. But unless I were to send you an account of the words and actions of every day, I know not where to begin. One particular circumstance, however, I will relate—Upon his going to leave us, knowing the scanty pittance he received from his parish, we thought it but an act of common honesty to refund him the expense he had been at in coming, and to bear his charges back again. Accordingly, after he had preached, on the last evening of his stay among us, the steward and trustees united to press his acceptance of a small purse, not as a present, but as a debt justly due to him. But he firmly and absolutely refused it. At length, being very urgent with him, and importunate to an excess, he took the purse in his hand. *Well, said he, do you really force it upon me? Must I accept of it? Is it entirely mine? And may I do with it as I please?* Yes, yes, we all replied. *God be praised then, God be praised,* said he, casting his brim-full eyes to Heaven, *behold, what a mercy is here! Your poor's fund was just out: I heard some of you*

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" *complaining.*

"complaining, that it was never so low before. Take
 "this purse. God has sent it you, raised it amongst
 "yourselves, and bestowed it upon your poor. You
 "cannot deny me. It is sacred to them. God be
 "praised! I thank you, I heartily thank you, my dear
 "kind brethren. Thus was his free Gospel
 "a bountiful provision for our poor, while this
 "last generous action served to harrow in the
 "precious seed, that his labor of love had been
 "sowing among us. Indeed it was a crowning of
 "his labors, a sealing of his message, that will
 "never be forgotten by us, that is registered in the
 "pages of eternity, and will follow him among
 "those works, that he ever gloried to cast at the
 "feet of Jesus."

Nothing more remains to be said, but that the dis-
 position above described, not confined to pecuniary
 matters, was exemplified through the whole conduct
 of M. de la Fléchère, manifesting, upon all occasions,
 that he acted under the entire influence of that dis-
 interested charity, which *seeketh not her own*.

T R A I T XXVIII.

**HIS CONDESCENSION IN LABORING, AT
 TIMES, WITH HIS OWN HANDS, THAT HE
 MIGHT PREACH INDUSTRY BY EXAMPLE,
 AS WELL AS BY PRECEPT.**

SUCH is the disinterestedness of the true
 minister, that though he might claim a sub-
 sistence from the sacred office, to which he has
 been

been solemnly consecrated, yet he generously chooses to sacrifice his rights, when he cannot enjoy them without giving some occasion for reproach. To supply his daily wants, he is not ashamed to labor with his own hands, when he is called to publish the Gospel, either among the poor, or in those countries, where the law has not appointed him a maintenance, as among heathen nations and savage tribes: nor will he refuse to do this, when his lot falls among a slothful people, animating them to diligence in their several vocations by his prudent condescension, that the Gospel may not be blamed. In such circumstances, if his own patrimony is insufficient for his support, no disciple of Jesus will blush to follow the example of St. Paul, who gives the following representation of his own conduct in cases of a like nature — *Have I committed an offence in abasing myself, that you might be exalted, because I have preached to you the Gospel of God freely? When I was present with you and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me; no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But that I may cut off occasion from them, that desire occasion, and who would not fail to represent me as a self-interested person, were they able to charge me with the*

enjoyment of my just rights among you (a). I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel: ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive (b). Ye know, how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travel night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you. For even, when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear, that there are some, which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies (c).

Happy were those times of christian simplicity, when the Apostles of Christ thought it no disgrace to follow some useful occupation, for the relief of their temporal necessities — when, instead of eating the bread of idleness, they cast their nets alternately for fishes and for men — when they quitted the tabernacles, in which they were wont to labor, for the sacred recreation of setting before sinners a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. Of how much greater value were the
nets

(a) 2 Cor. xi. 7—12. (b) Acts xx, 33, 35. (c) 2 Theff. iii, 7—11.

nets of St. Peter, than dogs of the chase ; and the working implements of St. Paul, than those tables of play, at which many of his unworthy successors are now seeking amusement !

But notwithstanding all the circumspection and prudence of the faithful pastor, even though he should think it necessary to preach industry by example, as well as by precept ; yet if his exhortations are more frequent than those of his lukewarm brethren, he will be reproached, by the irreligious part of the world, as an indirect advocate for indolence. The enemies of piety and truth are still ready to renew the old objection of Pharaoh against the service of God : *Wherefore do ye let the people from their works ? The people of the land are many, and you make them rest from their burdens. They be idle ; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let there more work be laid upon the men, and let them not regard vain words (d).* Such is the erroneous judgment, which is generally formed respecting the most zealous servants of God : but while they feel the bitterness of these unmerited reproaches, they draw more abundant consolation from the encouraging language of their gracious Master—*Blessed are ye, when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great*

L. 6. is

(d) Exodus v. 4, 9.

is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you (e).

The declared adversaries of religion are not, however, the only persons, who accuse a laborious minister of diverting the people from their business, by the too frequent returns of public exhortation and prayer: there are others, not wholly destitute of piety, who frequently add weight to these unjust accusations. Such are the half-converted, who not yet understanding the inestimable worth of that bread, which nourisheth the soul to everlasting life, are chiefly engaged in laboring for the bread which perisheth. Men of this character, engaging themselves in a vast variety of earthly concerns, incessantly *disquiet themselves in vain*, and consider those hours as running to waste, in which a zealous pastor detains them from worldly cares and frivolous enjoyments. While he is engaged in teaching, that *one thing only is absolutely needful*, they are grasping at every apparent good, that solicits their affections: and while he is insisting upon the necessity of choosing *that good part, which shall not be taken away*, these formal professors are ready to reason with him, as Martha with Jesus — Dost thou not know, how greatly we are cumbered with a multiplicity of vexatious concerns; and *carest thou not* that our assistants and dependents
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are detained from their necessary avocations by an indolent attendance upon thy ministry?

These false sentiments, with respect both to the ministers and the word of God, which too generally prevail among nominal christians, have their source in that direct opposition, which must always subsist between the grand maxim of the children of God, and the distinguishing principle of worldly men—*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness*, saith the blessed Jesus, *and all these things*, which are further necessary to your welfare, *shall be added unto you* (f): No, replies the prince of this world; seek ye first the enjoyments of time and sense, and all other things, that are needful to your well-being, shall be added over and above. From these two opposite principles results that entire contrariety, which has been observed in all ages between those, who are laying up treasures upon earth, and those, who have set their affections upon things, that are above. Happy are the faithful, and doubly happy the pastors, who, constantly imitating the great Apostle, according to their several vocations, pray and labor at the same time, both for their daily bread, and the bread of eternal life! In thus observing the two-fold command of Moses and of Christ, some reasonable hope may be entertained, that their good works will at length overcome the aversion

(f) Matt. vi. 33.

aversion of their enemies, as those of the first christians overcame the deep-rooted prejudices of the heathen world.

T R A I T XXIX.

THE RESPECT, HE MANIFESTED FOR THE HOLY ESTATE OF MATRIMONY, WHILE CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE ENGAGED HIM TO LIVE IN A STATE OF CELIBACY.

SOME ministers have carried their disinterestedness to so high a pitch, that they have refused to enter into the marriage state, merely with this view; that, being free from all superfluous care and expense, they might consecrate their persons more entirely to the Lord, and their possessions less reservedly to the support of the poor, whom they considered as their children, and adopted their heirs. But all pastors are not called to follow these rare examples of abstinence and disinterested piety.

When we examine into the life of a celebrated man, we generally enquire, whether he passed his days in a state of marriage or celibacy, and what it was, that determined his choice to the one or the other of these states. Such an enquiry is peculiarly necessary with respect to St. Paul, as many of the faithful, in the earliest ages of the church, deluded.

deluded by the amiable appearance of celibacy, embraced the monastic life — a state, to which the clergy and the religious of the romish church still dedicate themselves : whence those disgraceful accusations, which divers philosophers have preferred against the christian religion, as destructive of society in its very origin, which is the conjugal bond. But, leaving the reveries of legend, if we seek for christianity in the pure Gospel of Christ, we shall find this accusation to be totally groundless : since one view of the christian Legislator, in publishing that Gospel, was to strengthen the nuptial tie, by declaring, that an immodest glance is a species of adultery, by revoking the permission formerly given to the husband to put away his wife for any temporary cause of dissatisfaction, and by absolutely forbidding divorce, except in cases of adultery (a). Nay, so far did this divine Lawgiver carry his condescension in honor of the marriage state, that he was present at one of those solemn feasts, which were usually held upon such occasions, attended by the holy virgin and his twelve disciples : and not content with giving this public testimony of his respect for so honorable an institution, he accompanied it with the first miraculous proof of his almighty power.

St. Paul, it is true, passed the whole of his life in a state of celibacy ; but he never enjoined it to
any

(a) Matt. v. 28, 32.

any person : and if he occasionally recommended it to some, to whom it was indifferent, whether they married or not, it was chiefly on account of the distress and persecution of those times (b). To engage the most pious persons ordinarily to live in a state of celibacy, is not less contrary to nature and reason, than to the spirit of the Gospel. This is to oppose the propagation of the best christians and the most faithful subjects : it is to suppose, that those persons, who join example to precept in the cause of virtue, and who for that very reason are peculiarly qualified for the education of children, are the only persons in the world, who ought to have none. The absurdity of this opinion constrained the Apostle Paul publicly to combat it, by declaring to the Hebrews, that *Marriage and the bed undefiled are honorable among all men* (c). He further affirmed, that *a Bishop must be the husband of one wife, one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity* (d). And if he wished the Corinthians to continue in the state, which he himself had chosen, on account of the peculiar advantages accruing from it, at that season, to the persecuted members of the christian church ; *nevertheless to avoid fornication*, he counselled, that *every man should have his own wife, and every woman her own husband* (e). I will, saith he to Timothy, *that the*

(b) 1 Cor. vii. 26.

(c) Heb. xiii. 4.

(d) 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4.

(e) 1 Cor. vii. 2.

the younger women marry, bear children, and guide the house (f). And lastly, he cautioned the same christian Bishop against the error of those, who, in the last times, should *depart from the faith, giving heed to the doctrines of Devils, and forbidding to marry*; earnestly exhorting his young successor to guard the brethren against a doctrine, so fatal to the church in particular, and so destructive of society in general (g).

But it may be urged — If St. Paul really entertained such high ideas of marriage, and represented it as the most perfect emblem of that strict union, which subsists betwixt Christ and his church; why did he not recommend it by his example? I answer — Although St. Paul was never married, yet he expressly asserted his right to that privilege, as well as St. Peter and some others of the Apostles (h); intimating, at the same time, that prudence and charity inclined him to forego his right in that respect. When a man is perpetually called to travel from place to place, prudence requires, that he should not encumber himself with those domestic cares, which must occasion many unavoidable delays in the prosecution of his business: or, if he derives his maintenance from the generosity of the poor, charity should constrain him to burden them as little as possible. This zealous Apostle could not prevail upon himself to expose a woman and children

(f) 1 Tim. v. 14. (g) 1 Tim. iv. 1, 6. (h) 1 Cor. ix. 5.

children to those innumerable dangers, which he was constantly obliged to encounter. The first peril, from which he made his escape, was that, which compelled him to descend from the wall of Damascus in a basket: now if a family had shared with him the same danger, what an addition would they have made to his affliction and his care! Is it not evident, that, in such circumstances, every man, who is not obliged to marry from reasons either physical or moral, is called to imitate the example of this disinterested Apostle, from the same motives of prudence and charity? This indefatigable preacher, always on a mission, judged it adviseable to continue in a single state to the end of his days: but, had he been fixed in a particular church; had he there felt, how much it concerns a minister, neither to tempt others, nor be tempted himself; and had he known, how much assistance a modest, provident, and pious woman is capable of affording a pastor, by inspecting the women of his flock—he would then probably have advised every resident pastor to enter into the marriage state, provided they should fix upon regenerate persons, capable of edifying the church, in imitation of Phebe a deaconness of Cenchrea, and Persis, who was so dear to St. Paul on account of her labors in the Lord (i); or copying the example of those four virgins, the daughters of Philip, who edified, exhorted, and
 consoled

(i) Rom. xvi. 1, 12.

consoled the faithful by their pious discourses (k).*

The christian doctrine on this point may be reduced to the following heads. 1. In times of great trouble and grievous persecutions the followers of Christ should abstain from marriage, unless obliged

(k) Acts xxi. 9.

* The attention of ministers in choosing such companions, as may not hinder their success in the ministry, is of so great importance, that in some countries the conduct of a pastor's wife, as well as that of the pastor himself, is supposed either to edify or mislead the flock. Nay the minister himself is frequently condemned for the faults of his wife: thus in the protestant churches of Hungary, they degrade a pastor, whose wife indulges herself in cards, dancing, or any other public amusement, which bespeaks the gaiety of a lover of the world rather than the gravity of a christian matron. This severity springs from the supposition, that the woman, having promised obedience to her husband, can do nothing, but what he either directs or approves. Hence, they conclude, that example having a greater influence than precept, the wife of a minister, if she is inclined to the world, will preach worldly-compliance with more success by her conduct, than her husband can preach the renunciation of the world by the most solemn discourses. And the incredulity of the stumbled flock will always be the consequence of that unhappy inconsistency, which is observable between the serious instructions of a well-disposed minister, and the trifling conduct of a woman, with whom he is so intimately connected. Nor are there wanting apostolic ordinances, sufficient to support the exercise of this severe discipline: — *Even so must their wives be grave, not flatterers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the Bishop or Deacon be one, that ruleth well his own house, having his children, and every part of his family in subjection with all gravity: for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?* 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5, 11.

obliged thereto by particular and powerful reasons (l). 2. The faithful, who mean to embrace the nuptial state, should be careful, on no account, to connect themselves with any persons, except such as are remarkable for their seriousness and piety (m). 3. If a man is married before he is converted; or if, being converted, he is deceived in choosing a woman, whom he supposed to be pious, but discovers to be worldly; instead of separating himself from his wife, in either of these cases, he is rather called to give all diligence in bringing her acquainted with the truth, as it is in Jesus (n). 4. Missionaries ought not to marry unless there be an absolute necessity. 5. A Bishop or resident pastor, is usually called to the marriage state (o). Lastly. A minister of the Gospel, who is able to live in a state of celibacy *for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake*, that he may have no other care, except that of preaching the Gospel, and attending upon the members of Christ's mystical body; such a one is undoubtedly called to continue in a single state. For, having obtained the gift of continence, he is dispensed from carnally giving children to the church, because he begets her spiritual sons and daughters: and such a one, instead of being honored as the head of a particular household, should be counted worthy of double

(l) Matt. xxiv. 19. (m) 2 Cor. vi. 14. (n) 1 Cor. vii. 16.

(o) 1 Tim. iii. 12. Tit. i. 6.

double honor, as a spiritual father in his Lord's family (p).

NOTE XXV.

EARLY in life M. de la Fléchère was introduced to the company of Miss Bosanquet, a lady of distinguished piety, and one, who had been exposed to peculiar sufferings in the cause of godliness. From the very first acquaintance of these two excellent persons, they were deeply sensible of each other's worth, and felt the secret influence of a mutual attraction. But, notwithstanding the peculiar regard they entertained for each other, no intimate intercourse subsisted between them for many years after this period. Both were called to an extraordinary course of spiritual exercises: but, by the providence of God, they were appointed to labor in different stations. While *he* was exhausting his strength in the service of his flock, *she* was no less honorably employed in applying an ample fortune to the relief of the friendless, collecting together, and supporting under her own roof, an extensive family, composed of the afflicted, the indigent, and the helpless, but chiefly consisting of orphan children. To these occupations they devoted the prime of their days, and during more than twenty years unwearied attention to these sacred employments, no regular correspondence was maintained between them. They knew, however, and rejoiced in each other's labors: but

(p) Matt. xix. 12.

but while every succeeding report tended to encrease their mutual regard, they greatly endeavoured to turn the whole stream of their affections toward heavenly things, joyfully sacrificing every inferior consideration to the interest of the church, and the glory of their common Master. It was not till his last return from Switzerland, after his unexpected recovery from a dangerous illness, that M. de la Fléchère renewed his personal acquaintance with Miss Bosanquet, who received him as a friend restored from the grave. They had each of them studiously followed the leadings of providence in their appointed stations; and at this time, a combination of extraordinary circumstances led them into those habits of intimacy, which daily encreased their deep-rooted attachment to each other. There existed on either side a variety of motives to their immediate union, and not a single reason of any weight for their continued separation. Every seeming impediment was suddenly removed out of the way, and all things wonderfully conspired to accelerate that entire connection between them, which promised a large addition to their mutual comfort. At length, with the fullest persuasion, that they acted under the divine influence, they received each other at the altar, in the most solemn and affecting manner, as from the immediate hand of God, and in the presence of a multitude of friends, who rejoiced to see so much solid piety and worth united by an indissoluble tie. This union took place on the 12th day of November, 1781. And not long afterwards M. de la Fléchère conducted his truly amiable

amiable companion to the vicarage of Madeley, where they received the unaffected salutations of a joyful people.

From this period M. de la Fléchère considered himself as possessed of the last possible addition to his earthly happiness, never mentioning this memorable event, but with expressions of extraordinary gratitude and devotion to the God of all his mercies. And from this time, to the other parts of his character, must be added that of an attentive and affectionate husband, which he maintained with a becoming mixture of dignity and sweetness to the day of his death. By her christian conversation, her devotional habits, and her spiritual experience, Mrs. de la Fléchère was peculiarly suited to a state of the most entire and intimate fellowship with this eminent servant of God. She was of equal standing with him in the school of Christ, and of the same uncommon growth in grace; she had drank of the same spirit, was actuated by the same zeal, and prepared in every respect to accompany him in the christian race. By her discretion and prudence she bore the whole weight of his domestic cares, while by the natural activity of her mind and her deep acquaintance with divine things, she seconded his ministerial labors with astonishing success. Like Zecharias and Elisabeth, these extraordinary persons were both eminently righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. In their separate stations, they had long been distinguished as lights in dark places: but, after uniting their rays, they shone with redoubled lustre,

putting

putting to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and dissipating the prejudices, which many had entertained against the truths of the Gospel. It is with difficulty, that I forbear to enlarge upon this point: but as the world will probably one day be favored with a more interesting detail, relative to this part of my subject, to add any thing more in this place, would be only to forestal, what it can by no means render unnecessary.

For the space of almost four years, these christian yoke-fellows continued to enjoy, without interruption, all the inexpressible felicities of the most complete union; a union which appeared to promote, at once, their own particular happiness, and the interests of the people, among whom they jointly labored — when M. de la Fléchère was unexpectedly called from an imperfect anticipation, to the full fruition of heavenly blessedness. This afflicting providence was severely felt by the surviving party, who lost at this separating stroke whatever she had counted most valuable on this side eternity. But, while she felt all the anguish of an immediate separation from her dearest friend, she looked forward with a joyful hope of being one day united to his happy spirit, where the pangs of parting can be known no more. Mrs. de la Fléchère was surrounded upon this sad occasion by a multitude of sincere mourners, who, while they deplored the loss of their inestimable pastor, recollected, with peculiar satisfaction, that the last years of his life had been years of abundant consolation and peace: — and who now rejoice, that in his removal from among them,

them, he left behind him a lively representative of himself, one who enters into his labors and watches over his flock, a support to the needy, a guide to the ignorant, and *a mother in Israel*.

T R A I T X X X.

THE ARDOR OF HIS LOVE.

THE passions are the springs, by which we are usually actuated. Reason alone is too weak to put us in motion, so often as duty requires; but when love, that sacred passion of the faithful, comes in to its assistance, we are then sweetly constrained to act in conformity to the various relations we sustain in civil and religious life. Thus the God of nature has rooted in the hearts of mothers a fond affection, which keeps them anxiously attentive to the wants of their children: and thus the spirit of God implants in the bosom of a good pastor that ardent charity, which excites him to watch over his flock with the most affectionate and unwearied attention. The love of a father to his son, the attachment of a nurse to her foster-child, the tender affection of a mother to her infant, are so many emblems employed in the Holy Scriptures to set forth the sweetness and ardor of that

christian love, which animates the true minister to the performance of his several duties. *You knew, says St. Paul, how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children — We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us (a). God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ (b). Receive us; for ye are in our hearts to die and live with you (c).*

Worldly pastors can form no idea of that ardent charity, which dictates such benevolent language, and accompanies it with actions, which demonstrate its sincerity. This is one of those mysterious things, which are perfectly incomprehensible to the natural man, and which frequently appear to him as the extremest folly.

This fervent love improves us into new creatures, by the sweet influence it maintains over all our tempers. This holy passion deeply interests the faithful pastor in the concerns of his fellow-christians, and teaches him to rejoice in the benefits they receive, as though his own prosperity was inseparably connected with theirs. *I thank my God, writes the great Apostle to the benefactor of his brethren, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which*

thou

(a) 1 Theff. ii. 7, 8, 11. (b) Phil. i. 8. (c) 2 Cor. vii. 2, 3.

(d) Ph

thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; that the communication of thy faith may become effectual, by the acknowledging of every good thing, which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother (d).

The sorrow and the joy of this zealous imitator of Christ were generally influenced by the varying states of the faithful. When any, who had once ran well, were seen loitering by the way, or starting aside from the path of life, he expressed the most sincere affliction on their account — There are some, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ (e). On the other hand, the progress of believers was as marrow to his bones, and as the balsam of life to his heart — We are glad, when we are weak and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection (f). My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, holding forth the word of life: that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain (g).

Reader, whoever thou art, permit me to ask thee one important question. Art thou acquainted with that ardent charity, that influenced

M 2

the

(d) Philem. v. 4—7.

(e) Phil. iii. 18.

(f) 2 Cor. xiii. 9.

(g) Phil. iv. 1. ii. 15, 16.

the Apostle Paul? If his christian love was like a rapid and deep river; is thine, at least, like a running stream, whose waters fail not? Do thy joys and thy sorrows flow in the same channel, and tend to the same point as the sanctified passions of this benevolent man? Relate the chief causes of thy satisfaction and thy displeasure, and I will tell thee, whether, like Demas, thou art a child of this present world, or a fellow-citizen of Heaven with St. Paul. *

T R A I T XXXI.

I. GENEROUS FEARS AND SUCCEEDING CONSOLATIONS.

WHEN the church is threatened with a storm, the worldly pastor has no fears except for himself and his relations. But the true minister, if he is at all disquieted with fear, when the Lord's vessel is driven with the winds, or appears to be in danger through the indiscreet conduct of false or unloving brethren, he feels much less for his own safety, than for the security of his companions in tribulation. He fears especially for

* Have you more joy, when your preaching augments your income, than when you observe a wandering sheep conducted into the right way? then conclude, that you preach more for mammon than for Christ. M. ROQUES.

for the weak of the flock, and for those of the faithful, who are exposed to violent temptation: and these generous fears, which equally prove his holy zeal and his brotherly love, without robbing him of all his joy, afford him frequent opportunities of exercising his faith, his resignation, and his hope.

We were troubled, faith St. Paul, on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. I fear, lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would (a). When we could no longer forbear, we sent Timothy to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know, that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before, that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain (b).

Though these *fightings without*, and these *fears within*, are always painful to the flesh, yet they are as constantly beneficial to the soul. If they subject the true minister for a season to the keenest affliction, they prepare him in the end for *strong consolation*. Observe the manner, in which the great Apostle expresses himself upon this point —

M 3

We

(a) 2 Cor. vii. 5. xi. 3. xii. 20. (b) 1 Thess. iii. 1—5.

We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust, that he will yet deliver us (c). I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things, which happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places: and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear (d). Hence, we glory in tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (e). Blessed be God, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ (f).

(c) 2 Cor. i. 8—10. (d) Phil. i. 12—14. (e) Rom. v. 3—5.
(f) 2 Cor. i. 2—5.

If those who are honored with a commission to publish the Gospel were fully convinced how gracious and powerful a Master they serve, instead of being alarmed at the sight of those labors and dangers, which await them in the exercise of their ministry, they would stand prepared to run all hazards in his service; as courageous soldiers, who fight under the eye of a generous prince, are ready to expose their lives for the augmentation of his glory. Can it become good pastors to manifest less concern for the salvation of their brethren, than mercenary warriors for the destruction of their prince's foes? And if the Romans generously exposed themselves to death, in preserving the life of a fellow-citizen, for the trifling reward of a civic wreath, how much greater magnanimity should a christian pastor discover in rescuing the souls of his brethren from a state of perdition, for the glorious reward of a never-fading crown?

T R A I T XXXII.

**THE GRAND SUBJECT OF HIS GLORIFYING,
AND THE EVANGELICAL MANNER, IN
WHICH HE MAINTAINED HIS SUPERIOR-
ITY OVER FALSE APOSTLES.**

THE disposition of a faithful pastor is, in every respect, diametrically opposite to that of a worldly minister. If you observe the conversation of an ecclesiastic, who is influenced by the spirit of the world, you will hear him intimating either that he has, or that he would not be sorry to have, the precedency among his brethren, to live in a state of affluence and splendor, and to secure to himself such distinguished appointments as would increase both his dignity and his income, without making any extraordinary addition to his pastoral labors : you will find him anxious to be admitted into the best companies, and occasionally forming parties for the chase or some other vain amusement. While the true pastor cries out in the self renouncing language of the great Apostle : *God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world* (a).

If

(a) Gal. vi. 14.

If the minister, who is really formed to preside in the church, was singled out from among his brethren, and placed in an Apostolic chair, he would become the more humble for his exaltation: — if such a one was slighted and vilified by false Apostles, he would not appeal, for the honor of his character, to the superiority of his talents, his rank, or his mission; but rather to the superiority of his labors, his dangers, and his sufferings. Thus, at least, St. Paul defended the dignity of his character against the unjust insinuations of his adversaries in the ministry — *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more.* But in what manner did he attempt to prove this? Was it by saying, I have a richer benefice than the generality of ministers; I am a doctor, a professor of divinity, I bear the mitre, and dwell in an episcopal palace? No: instead of this, he used the following apostolic language. *In labors I am more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. In journeyings often, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils by the heathen, in perils among false brethren: In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things, that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things,*

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which

which concern mine infirmities (b). From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus (c).

Such are the appeals of holy prelates. But for a man to glory in having obtained a deanery, a professor's chair, or a bishoprick, is in reality to boast of his unfaithfulness to his vocation, and to prove himself unworthy of the rank, to which he has been injudiciously raised.

Ye who preside over the household of God, learn of the Apostle Paul to manifest your real superiority. Surpass your inferiors in humility, in charity, in zeal, in your painful labors for the salvation of sinners, in your invincible courage to encounter those dangers, which threaten your brethren, and by your unwearied patience in bearing those persecutions, which the faithful disciples of Christ are perpetually called to endure from a corrupt world. Thus shall you honorably replace the first christian prelates, and happily restore the church to its primitive dignity.

(b) 2 Cor. xi. 23—30. (c) Gal. vi. 17.

TRAIT

T R A I T XXXIII.

HIS PATIENCE AND FORTITUDE UNDER
THE SEVEREST TRIALS.

CHARITY is not easily provoked; but on the contrary thinketh no evil. Full of patience and meekness, Christ distinguished himself by his abundant love to those from whom he received the most cruel treatment. Thus also the ministers of Christ are distinguished, who, as they are more or less courageous and indefatigable in the work of the ministry, are enabled to adopt the following declaration of St. Paul with more or less propriety: *Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are as the off-scouring of all things unto this day (a). Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves, as the ministers of God in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God,*

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(a) 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13.

by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, which enables us to attack error and vice, while it shields us from their assaults ; by honor and dishonor ; by evil report and good report ; as deceivers, and yet true ; as unknown, and yet well known ; as dying, and behold, we live ; as chastened, and not killed ; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things (b).

Far from being discouraged by the trials, which befal him, the true minister is disposed in such circumstances to pray with the greater fervency ; and according to the ardor and constancy of his prayers, such are the degrees of fortitude and patience, to which he attains. *We have not received, saith St. Paul, the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself, amidst all our distresses, beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (c). I besought the Lord thrice that this trial might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake :*

(b) 2 Cor. vi. 3, 10. (c) Rom. viii. 15, 26.

sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (d). I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me (e).

What an advantage, what an honor is it, to labor in the service of so gracious and powerful a Master! By the power, with which he controls the world, he overrules all things *for good to them, that love him.* Their most pungent sorrows are succeeded by peculiar consolations; the reproach of the cross prepares them for the honors of a crown; and the flames in which they are sometimes seen to blaze, become like that chariot of fire, which conveyed Elijah triumphantly away from the fury of Jezebel.

NOTE XXVI.

THOU, O God, hast tried us like as silver is tried, has been the language of the faithful in every period of the church: *for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Of that chastisement, whereof all the children of the Kingdom are partakers, M. de la Fléchère was not without a painful share. He had fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and could bear ample testimony to the fatherly corrections of that righteous God, *whose fire is in Sion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.* His trials were of various kinds, frequently repeated, many times of long continuance, and,

(d) 2 Cor. xii. 8, 10. (e) Phil. iv. 13.

on some occasions peculiarly severe. But from whatever quarter his trials arose, whether he suffered through bodily infirmity and pain, from the infidelity of *false brethren*, or from the despatchfulness of open enemies, he suffered as a man unreservedly devoted to the will of God, regarding neither ease nor health, the consolations of social intercourse, nor the estimation of the world, but so far as they tended to promote, either the welfare of his brethren, or the glory of their common Lord.

Three things were especially observable in his conduct with respect to trials in general. First. He was careful never to plunge himself into difficulties through inadvertence and precipitation. Conscious, that his path was encompassed with innumerable dangers and snares, he proceeded in his course with the utmost wariness and circumspection, deliberating on the tendency of every expression, and weighing the probable consequences of every step. Without swerving to the one hand by intemperate zeal, or to the other by worldly compliance, he steadily persevered in the path of duty, endeavouring *to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.*

Secondly. Wherever he saw a trial awaiting him in the order of providence, how terrific an aspect soever it might wear, he went on to meet it without the least indications of despondency or fear. He esteemed no difficulty too great to be surmounted, no cross too heavy to be endured, nor any enemy too strong to be opposed, in the way of God's appointment. Here he considered himself as under the immediate

immediate protection of the Almighty, and knowing in whom he believed, he committed the keeping of his soul to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Thirdly. He entered into the conflict under a lively impression of the truth of that apostolic declaration: *Blessed is the man, that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.* This sentiment sustained him in the day of trouble, and produced in him a degree of fortitude proportioned to the severity of the trial. He could smile under the languors of disease and the violence of pain, he could hear without emotion the reproaches of malice, and receive without resentment the shafts of ingratitude, counting it all joy, when he fell into divers temptations, and glorifying the Lord in the fiercest fires of affliction. But while he discovered an astonishing degree of firmness under the sharpest trials, he was a perfect stranger to that stoical fullness, which steels the heart against the attacks of adversity. His fortitude was sustained not by insensibility, but by patience and resignation. Through the most afflicting providential dispensations his attention was fixed upon that wondrous example of patient suffering, which was exhibited in the High Priest of his profession: and if ever his sensibility constrained him to cry out, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; his resignation as constantly disposed him to add, nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.* Such was the conduct of M. de la Fléchère with respect to trials of every kind. He never created them through imprudence; he never avoided them through timidity; he never endured

endured them but with an uncommon share of fortitude and patience; and it may be added, that he never experienced the removal of a trial, without thankfully ascribing his support under it, and his deliverance from it, to the gracious interference of that invisible arm, which is *mighty to save*.

With such dispositions, it is not difficult to conceive, that like Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, he held communion with the Son of God in the hottest furnace of affliction; or that, like Job, he came forth from the most grievous trials, as gold purified in the fire. The friends he has left behind him, can joyfully testify, that he had learned the happy art of *glorying even in tribulations*; from a consciousness, *that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience; and experience, hope*. Nay, they are further prepared to testify, that his hope was matured into the fullest assurance, when they recollect how he would frequently come forth from a state of keen distress, repeating the confidential exclamation of the great Apostle: *who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him, that hath loved us*.

TRAIT

T R A I T XXXIV.

HIS MODEST FIRMNESS BEFORE
MAGISTRATES.

SUPPORTED by a strong persuasion, that God and truth are on his side, the faithful minister is carried above all those disheartening fears, which agitate the hearts of worldly pastors. Depending upon the truth of that solemn prediction; *They will deliver you up to the council, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the gentiles;* he expects in times of persecution to appear before magistrates, and possibly before kings, for the cause of Christ and his Gospel. Nor is he afflicted at such a prospect. Relying on the promise of that compassionate Redeemer, who once appeared for him before Annas and Caiaphas, Herod and Pontius Pilate, without anxiously premeditating what he shall answer, and resting assured, that wisdom shall be given him in every time of need, he cries out with the holy determination of the Psalmist: *I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed* (a).

When he is brought as a malefactor before the judge; while his accusers, actuated by malicious zeal,

(a) Psalm cxix. 46.

zeal, agree to say—*We have found this man a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among the people, and one of the ringleaders of a new and dangerous sect; he justifies himself by answering—The witnesses, who appear against me this day, neither found me trampling under foot the authority of my superiors, nor sowing the seeds of sedition among the people; neither can they prove the things, whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess, that after the way, which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things, which are written in the Law and the Prophets; and have hope toward God, which they themselves allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And supposing his accusers are not only deists, but professors of the christian faith, he will add: This also I confess, that in conformity to those principles, which pretended philosophers term superstitious, and which lukewarm christians call enthusiastic, I believe not only in God the Father Almighty, but also in Jesus Christ his only Son, whom I acknowledge to be King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and who, after having suffered for our sins, rose again for our justification. Further; I joyfully subscribe to that confession of faith, which is frequently in your own mouths—I believe in the Holy Ghost, who regenerates and sanctifies every true member of the holy catholic church: and I participate with those members the common advantages of our*

most

most holy faith, which are an humble consciousness of *the forgiveness of sins*, a lively hope of *the resurrection of the body*, and a sweet anticipation of *everlasting life*. *And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men* (b).

If his judge already prejudiced against him, should unbecomingly join issue with his accusers, and charge him with extravagance and fanaticism; he will answer after St. Paul, with all due respect, *I am not mad: but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. And I would to God, that not only thou, but also all who hear me this day were altogether such as I am, except these bonds* (c).

After a pastor has had experience of these difficult trials, he is then in a situation to confirm younger ministers in the manner of St. Paul—I know, whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep, that which I have committed unto him, against that day. *At my first answer, no man stood with me; but all men forsook me: Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the gentiles might hear the Gospel: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his Heavenly Kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever* (d).

Behold

(b) Acts xxiv. 5, 16.

(c) Acts xxvi. 24, 29.

(d) 2 Tim. i. 12. Tit. 26, 18.

Behold the inconveniences and dangers, to which not only christian pastors, but all, who follow the steps of the Apostle Paul, will be exposed in every place, where the bigoted or the incredulous occupy the first posts in church or state! And whether we are called to endure *torments*, or only to suffer *reproach* in the cause of truth, let us endeavour to support the sufferings, that shall fall to our lot, with that resolution and meekness, of which St. Paul and his adorable Master have left us such memorable examples.

T R A I T XXXV.

HIS COURAGE IN CONSOLING HIS PERSECUTED BRETHREN.

PERSUADED, that *all, who will live* godly in Christ Jesus, and particularly his ministers, *shall suffer persecution* (a), the good pastor looks for opposition from every quarter: and whenever he suffers for the testimony he bears to the truths of the Gospel, he suffers not only with resolution, but with joy.

The more the God of this degenerate world exalts himself in opposition to truth, the more he disposes every sincere heart for the reception of it.

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(a) 2 Tim. iii. 12.

The Gospel is that everlasting rock, upon which the church is founded, and against which *the gates of Hell* can never prevail: and though this rock is assailed by innumerable hosts of visible and invisible enemies, yet their repeated assaults serve only to demonstrate, with increasing certainty, its unshaken firmness and absolute impenetrability. A clear sight of the *sovereign good*, as presented to us in the Gospel, is sufficient to make it universally desirable. The veil of inattention, however, conceals in a great measure this *sovereign good*, and the mists of prejudice entirely obscure it. But by the inhuman conduct of the persecutors of christianity, their false accusations, their secret plots, and their unexampled cruelty, these mists are frequently dissipated, and these veils rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Error is by these means unwittingly exposed to the view of the world; while every impartial observer attracted by the charms of persecuted truth, examines into its nature, acknowledges its excellence, and at length triumphs in the possession of that inestimable pearl, which he once despised. Thus the tears of the faithful and the blood of confessors have been generally found to scatter and nourish the seed of the Kingdom.

Ye zealous defenders of truth! let not the severest persecutions alarm your apprehension or weaken your confidence; since every trial of this kind must necessarily terminate in your own advantage,

vantage, as well as in the establishment and glory of the christian faith. Error, always accompanied with contradictions, and big with absurd consequences, will shortly appear to be supported by no other prop, than that of prejudice or passion, or the despotism of a usurped authority, which renders itself odious by the very means employed for its support. The more the partisans of every false doctrine sound the alarm against you, the more they resemble a violent multitude opposing the efforts of a few, who are laboring to extinguish the fire, that consumes their neighbours' habitations : the different conduct of the one and the other must, sooner or later, manifest the incendiaries.

Error may be compared to a vessel of clay, and truth to a vase of massy gold. In vain is calumny endeavouring to render the truth contemptible by overheaping it with every thing that is abominable ; in vain would prejudice give error an amiable appearance by artfully concealing its defects : for whenever the hand of persecution shall furiously hurl the latter against the former, the solid gold will sustain the shock unhurt, while the varnished clay shall be dashed in pieces.

The experience, however, of seventeen ages has not been sufficient to demonstrate to persecutors a truth so evident ; nor are there wanting inexperienced believers in the church, who are ready to call it in question, and who, *when persecution ariseth because of the word*, are unhappily

happily observed to lose their christian resolution. But, *why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing, the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed?* He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn, and make their malice serve to the accomplishment of his great designs (b).

Thus the Jews, in crucifying Christ, contributed to lay the grand foundation of the christian church; and afterwards by persecuting the Apostle Paul to death, gave him an opportunity of bearing the torch of truth to Rome, and even into the palaces of its emperors. And it was from Rome itself, as from the jaws of a devouring lion, that he comforted the faithful, who were ready to faint at his afflictions, and encourage them to act in conformity to their glorious vocation. *I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying; For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel, according to the power of God: who*
hath

hath called us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an Apostle, for the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed. Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (c).

Happy is the faithful minister of Christ amid all the severe afflictions to which he is sometimes exposed! Though troubled on every side, yet he is not distressed; though perplexed, yet not in despair; though persecuted, yet not forsaken; though cast down, yet not destroyed. All the violent attacks of his enemies must finally contribute to the honor of his triumph, while their flagrant injustice gives double lustre to the glorious cause, in which he suffers.

TRAIT XXXVI.

HIS HUMBLE CONFIDENCE IN PRODUCING THE SEALS OF HIS MINISTRY.

A PASTOR must, sooner or later, convert sinners, if he sincerely and earnestly calls them to repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, though filled

(c) 2 Tim. ii. 9—12. i. 8—12. ii. 3.

filled with indignation against sin, with compassion toward the impenitent, and with gratitude to Christ, he should, like St. Paul, in proportion to his strength, wrestle with God by prayer, with sinners by exhortation, and with the flesh by abstinence; yet even then, as much unequal to that Apostle, as he was unequal to his Master, he may reasonably despair of frequently beholding the happy effects of his evangelical labors. But, if he cannot adopt the following apostolic language: *Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest, the savour of his knowledge by us in every place*: he will, at least, be able to say in his little sphere—*We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them, that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, the savour of life unto life* (a). If he has not, like St. Paul, planted new vines, he is engaged, with Apollos, in watering those, which are already planted; he is rooting up some withered cumberers of the ground, he is lopping off some unfruitful branches, and propping up those tender sprigs, which the tempest has beaten down.

He would be the most unhappy of all faithful ministers, had he not some in his congregation, to whom he might with propriety address himself in the following terms: *Do we need epistles*

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(a) 2 Cor. ii. 14—16.

of commendation to you? Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart (b). Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an Apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel (c).

When a minister of the Gospel, after laboring for several years in the same place, is unacquainted with any of his flock, to whom he might modestly hold the preceding language; it is to be feared, that he has labored too much like the generality of pastors in the present day: since the word of God, when delivered with earnestness and without adulteration, is usually quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow (d). He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like a fire; and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces? Behold I am against them, that cause my people to err by their lies and by ^{their}

(b) 2 Cor. iii. 1—3. (c) 1 Cor. ix. 2. iv. 15. (d) Heb. iv. 12.

their lightness : therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord (e).

Those ministers, who are anxious so to preach, and so to conduct themselves, as neither to trouble the peace of the formal, nor to alarm the fears of the impenitent, are undoubtedly the persons peculiarly alluded to in the following solemn passage of Jeremiah's prophecy: *Mine heart within me is broken, because of the prophets; all my bones shake, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. They walk in lies, either actually or doctrinally: they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness. From the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. They speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say unto them, that secretly despise me, The Lord hath said, ye shall have peace: and they say unto every one, that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings (f).*

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Behold

(e) Jer. xxiii. 28—32. (f) Jer. xxiii. 9—22.

Behold the reason, why nothing can so much afflict a faithful minister, as not to behold from time to time, unfeigned conversions effected among the people by means of his ministry. The husbandman, after having diligently prepared and plentifully sowed his fields, is sensibly afflicted, when he sees the hopes of his harvest all swept away at once by a furious storm: but he feels not so lively a sorrow as the charitable pastor, who after having liberally scattered around him the seeds of wisdom and piety, beholds his parish overrun with the noxious weeds of vanity and vice. If Nabals are still intoxicated; if Cains are still implacable; if Ananiases are still deceitful, and Sapphiras still prepared to favor their deceit; if Marthas are still cumbered with earthly cares; if Dinahs are still exposing themselves to temptation, even to the detriment of their honor, and to the loss of that little relish, which they once discovered for piety; and if the formal still continue to approach God with their lips, while their hearts are far from him — a good pastor at the sight of these things is pierced through with many sorrows, and feels, in a degree, what Elijah felt, when, overburdened with fatigue and chagrin, *he sat down under a juniper tree, and said; It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.* (g).

Indifference

Indifference, in a matter of so great importance, is one of the surest marks by which an unworthy pastor may be discerned. Of what consequence is it to a worldly minister, whether the flock, about which he takes so little trouble, is composed of sheep or goats? He seeks not so much to benefit his people, as to discharge the more exterior duties of his office in such a way, as may not incur the censure of his superiors in the church, who, possibly, are not a whit less lukewarm than himself. And if a tolerable party of his unclean flock do but disguise themselves three or four times in a year, for the purpose of making their appearance at the sacramental table, he is perfectly satisfied with the good order of his parish; especially, when the most detestable vices, such as extortion, theft, adultery, or murder, are not openly practised in it.

This outward kind of decency, which is so satisfactory to the worldly minister, and which is ordinarily effected by the constraining force of the civil laws, rather than by the truths of the Gospel, affords the faithful pastor but little consolation. He is solicitous to see his people hungering and thirsting after righteousness, working out their salvation with fear and trembling, and engaging in all the duties of christianity, with as much eagerness, as the children of the world pursue their shameful pleasures or trifling amusements: and if he has not yet enjoyed this satisfaction, he

humbles himself before God, and anxiously enquires after the reason of so great an unhappiness. He is conscious, that if his ministry is not productive of good fruit, the sterility of the word must flow from one or other of the following causes — either he does not publish the Gospel in its full latitude and purity, in a manner sufficiently animating, or in simplicity and faith: perhaps he is not careful to second his zealous discourses by an exemplary conduct: perhaps he is negligent in imploring the blessing of God upon his public and private labors: or probably his hearers may have conceived inveterate prejudices against him, which make them inattentive to his most solemn exhortations; so that instead of being received among them as an ambassador of Christ, he can apply to himself the proverb, formerly cited by his rejected Master: *No prophet is accepted in his own country*, where he is accustomed to be seen without ceremony, and heard without curiosity.

If the fault appears to be on his own side, he endeavours to apply the most speedy and efficacious remedies, redoubling his public labors, and renewing his secret supplications with more than ordinary fervor of spirit. But if, after repeated trials, he is convinced, that his want of success chiefly flows from the invincible hatred of his flock to the truths of the Gospel, or from the sovereign contempt, which his parishioners manifest both for his person and his labors; he is then

then justified in following the example of his unerring Master, who refused to exercise his ministry in those places where prejudice had locked up the hearts of the people against the reception of his evangelical precepts.

When, in such a situation, a pastor is fearful of following the example of our Lord, lest he should be left destitute of a maintenance, in how deplorable a state must he drag through the wearisome days of a useless life! If every sincere christian is ready to take up his cross, to quit friends and possessions, to renounce life itself, on account of the Gospel; can we consider that minister, as a man really consecrated to the service of Christ, who has not resolution sufficient to give up a house, a garden, and a salary, when the welfare of his own soul and the interests of the church require such a sacrifice?

When a preacher of the Gospel counts less upon the promises of his Master, than upon the revenues of his benefice, may we not reasonably conclude, that he is walking in the footsteps of Balaam, rather than of St. Paul? And is it for such a man, to *declare the statutes* of the Lord, or to recite the words of his *covenant* (h)? Attempting to publish, before he effectually believes, the truths of the Gospel? And has he not a front of brass, when, with the dispositions of a Demas, he mounts the pulpit, to celebrate the

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bounty

(h) Psalm 1, 16.

bounty of that God, who supplies the little wants of sparrows, who feeds the young ravens that call upon him, opening his hand and filling all things living with plenteousness? Let such a one consider, that the character of a virtuous preceptor, or an honest tradesman, is abundantly more honorable than that of a mercenary priest.

In general, it may be reasonably supposed, that if a pastor faithfully exercises his ministry in any place, to which he has been appointed by the providence of God, he will either benefit those among whom he is called to labor, or his hardened hearers will, at length, unite to drive him from among them, as the inhabitants of Nazareth forced Jesus away from their ungrateful city. Or if he should not be forcibly removed from his post, as was the case of our Lord in the country of the Gadarenes, yet believing it incumbent upon him to retire from such a part, he will seek out some other place in his Master's vineyard, that shall better repay the pains of cultivation; whatever such a removal may cost him in the judgment of the world. And, indeed, such a mode of conduct was positively prescribed by our Lord to his first ministers, in the following solemn charge: *Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words; when, slighted and reproached by its unworthy inhabitants, ye are constrained to depart out of that*

house

house or city, shake off the dust of your feet, as a testimony against those, who prefer the maxims of the world before the precepts of the Gospel (i).

If any pastor refuses to adopt this method of proceeding, after patience has had its perfect work; if he still fears to give up an establishment, as the sons in law of Lot were afraid of forsaking their possessions in Sodom, he then acts in direct opposition to the command of Christ; he obstinately occupies the place of a minister, against whom, very probably, less prejudice might be entertained, and whose ministry, of consequence, would be more likely to produce some salutary effect; he loses his time in casting pearls before swine; and instead of converting his parishioners, he only aggravates the condemnation due to their obduracy.

The faithful pastor, however, is not soon discouraged, though he beholds no beneficial consequences of his ministry. His unbounded charity suffers, hopes, and labors long, without fainting. The more sterile the soil appears, which he is called to cultivate, the more he waters it, both with his tears and with the sweat of his brow; the more he implores for it *the dew of Heaven*, and the influences of that divine Sun, which spreads light and life through every part of the church. It is not, therefore, (let it be repeated) till after *patience* has had its *perfect work*, that a

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conscientious

(i) Matt. x. 11, 14.

conscientious minister takes the final resolution of quitting his post, in order to seek out some other situation, in which his labors may be attended with greater profit.

T R A I T XXXVII.

*HIS READINESS TO SEAL WITH HIS BLOOD
THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL.*

HE, who is not yet prepared to die for his Lord, has not yet received that *perfect love*, which *casteth out fear*: and it is a matter of doubt, whether any preacher is worthy to appear in a pulpit, whose confidence in the truths of the Gospel is not strong enough to dispose him, in certain situations, to seal those truths with his blood. If he really shrinks from the idea of dying in the cause of christianity, is it for him to publish a Saviour, who is *the resurrection and the life*? And may he not be said to play with his conscience, his auditors, and his God, if, while he is the slave of sin and fear, he presents himself as a witness of the salvation of that omnipotent Redeemer, who, *through death, has destroyed him, that had the power of death*; and who, by his resurrection, has *delivered them, who through fear*
of

of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage (a).

Love, in the language of Solomon, is strong as death: but the true minister glows with that fervent love to Christ and his brethren, which is abundantly stronger than those fears of death, which would prevent him, in times of persecution, from the faithful discharge of his ministerial functions. Such was the love of St. Paul, when he cried out to those, who would have dissuaded him from the dangerous path of duty: *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus* (b). And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things, that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus (c). For I know, that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ: according to my earnest expectation, that Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. And if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all (d).

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Thus

(a) Heb. ii, 14, 15. (b) Acts xxi. 13. (c) Acts xx. 22—24.

(d) Phil. i, 19—21, ii, 17.

Thus *The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep : but he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth ; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep (e)*. Happy is that church, whose pastor is prepared to tread in the steps of *the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls* ! St. Paul would not have been ashamed to acknowledge such a one, as his companion and fellow-laborer in the work of the Lord.

T R A I T XXXVIII.

*THE SWEET SUSPENSE OF HIS CHOICE
BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.*

WHATEVER desire the faithful pastor may have to be with Christ, and to rest from his labors ; yet he endures with joy his separation from the person of his Saviour, through the sacred pleasure he experiences in the service of his members. The sweet equilibrium, in which his desire was suspended between life and death, is thus expressed by the Apostle Paul : *We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. For*
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(e) John x, 31, 32.

in this we groan earnestly; desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from Heaven: knowing, that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (a). Yet, what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know, that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith (b).

It is chiefly, when believers have the unconquerable love of St. Paul, that all things work together for their good. Whether they live, or whether they die, every occurrence turns out a matter of favor. If they live; it is, that they may support their companions in tribulation, and insure to themselves a greater reward, by maintaining, for a longer season, the victorious fight of faith — if they die; it is, that they may rest from their labors, and come to a more perfect enjoyment of their Master's presence. *Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord: they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them* (c). And in the mean-time, blessed are the living, who live in the Lord: for they are honorably engaged in those important conflicts, which will daily add to their spiritual strength, and augment the brilliancy of their final triumph.

(a) 2 Cor. v. 1—6. (b) Phil. i. 22—25. (c) Rev. xiv. 13.

NOTE

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(e) John x, 11, 12.

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(a) 2 Cor. v. 1—6. (b) Phil. i. 22—25. (c) Rev. xiv. 13.

NOTE XXVII.

WHILE M. de la Fléchère was zealously engaged in fighting *the good fight of faith*, he looked forward, with increasing desire, to the happy moment, when he should exchange the weapons of war for the crown of glory. Not that he was averse to the duties of his vocation, or wearied with the length of his services: but, being exceedingly *athirst for God, as the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panted his soul after the more immediate presence of God*. Though he was favored with the enjoyment of many inestimable blessings by the *way*, yet he looked with unutterable longings to the *end* of his course; knowing, that to be *at home* in the body, is to be *absent from the Lord*. Though he experienced inexpressible delight in the society of such as worshipped in the outer courts of the Lord's house; still he saw it infinitely more desirable, to associate with *the spirits of just men made perfect*, in the inner places of his invisible temple. And though he was, at times, permitted a momentary glimpse of heavenly mysteries, yet he earnestly desired, that, *mortality being swallowed up of life*, he might *behold with open face the glory of the Lord*. This desire, which accompanied him through every state, was expressed with a more than ordinary degree of fervor, in seasons of weakness and disease. In these solemn intervals, when he appeared to be speedily advancing toward the confines of eternity, he rejoiced as a weary traveller within sight of his home. His immortal prospects

pects became more enlarged and transporting, his conversation was correspondent to the grandeur of his views, and his whole appearance was that of a man, already clothed in the wedding garment, and hastening to sit down at *the marriage supper of the Lamb*. There was something in his deportment upon these awful occasions, which reminded me of the transfiguration of his Master upon mount Tabor—While Moses and Elias were conversing with the blessed Jesus on his approaching decease, *the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and glistering*: so, while the harbingers of death were apparently completing their work on the emaciated frame of this holy man, his silent meditations have been frequently accompanied with so much visible delight, such an extatic glow has diffused itself over his whole countenance, and his eye has been directed upwards with a look of such inexpressible sweetness, that one would almost have supposed him, at such seasons, conversing with Angelical spirits on his approaching dissolution, and the glory that should follow.

But, notwithstanding the intimate views he enjoyed of a happy immortality, and the intense desire he expressed to be with Christ, when he considered the importance of his change, and the probability of being rendered further serviceable to the church, charity toward his companions in tribulation gave birth to a new desire, and kept him in a state of sweet suspense between the labors of grace and the rewards of glory.

It was in such a state, that he took an affecting leave of his people at Madeley
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in the year 1776, when his disorder had increased upon him to so alarming a degree, that the possibility of his recovery was universally doubted. He delivered a discourse upon that occasion from those pertinent words of St. Paul: *What I shall choose, I know not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.* In the course of this sermon, he adverted, in the most pathetic terms, to the painful situation, in which he then presented himself to his hearers; so debilitated by disease, that he was unable any longer to discharge among them the public duties of his ministerial station. From his present weakness, he looked back to his past labors, making many affecting reflections upon his own unworthiness, the indubitable testimonies he had received of his people's unfeigned affection, and the unusual success of his ministry among them. Here he enlarged upon the two leading desires of his soul. On the one hand, he made a solemn declaration of the earnest longing, with which he desired to be *absent from the body*, that he might be *present with the Lord*: and on the other, he expressed a more than parental attachment to his people; an attachment, which excited in him a wish, that he might still be permitted to labor for their furtherance and establishment in the faith of the Gospel. But what to choose, he knew not: nor was his present suspense attended with any degree of anxiety, since he foresaw unquestionable blessings awaiting him on either hand. He saw the balance poised by unerring wisdom, and was cheerfully

fully content to wait the issue with one uninterrupted request; that whether he lived, he might *live unto the Lord*, or whether he died, he *might die unto the Lord*; that whether living or dying he might be *the Lord's*.

Such was the sweet suspense, which this man of God experienced, between a state of labor and a state of rest, which continued for more than two years, and which was at last happily determined in favor of his people, who were permitted the enjoyment of his ministry for a long season after this period, rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord, and abundantly profiting by the labors of his invigorated servant.

T R A I T XXXIX.

THE CONSTANCY OF HIS ZEAL AND DILIGENCE TO THE END OF HIS COURSE.

LIVING or dying, the faithful servant of Christ never acts unworthy of his character. *Blameless and harmless in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, a child of God, without rebuke, he shines, to the end of his course, as a light in the world (a).* He beholds death, whether it be natural or violent, always without fear, and generally with pleasure, regarding it as a messenger

(a) Phil. ii. 15.

a messenger appointed for his safe conduct into that glorious state, where they rejoice together, who have continued faithful to the end. He is anxious only, that his Lord may find him occupied in the grand business, he was commissioned to perform : and the nearer his hour approaches, the more earnest he is, that he may finish his ministry with joy. If he is no longer able to exhort the brethren in person, he writes to them in the manner of St. Peter : *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, the doctrines, precepts, threatenings, and promises of the Gospel, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance ; knowing, that shortly I must put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me (b).* He desires at such a season, to address the faithful, and especially young ministers, as St. Paul addressed the Corinthians and Timothy : *My beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as ye know, that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (c).* *Thou, Timothy, hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra ; what persecutions I endured : but out of them all the Lord delivered*

(b) 2 Pet. i. 12—14. (c) 1 Cor. xv. 58.

delivered me. Yea, and all, that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry; for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand (d.)

Thus triumphantly St. Paul advanced toward the end of his course. And thus the faithful minister, pouring fresh oil into his lamp as the night advances, goes forth to meet his approaching God, whom his faith already considers as a faithful Judge, and his hope as a munificent Rewarder.

NOTE XXVIII.

IT is no unusual thing, to behold the professors of christianity divested, at a maturer age, of that burning love and that irresistible zeal, by which they were peculiarly distinguished in early life. Of the many thousands, who have in every age begun the sacred race with an apparent determination to obtain the prize, the greater part, either wearied with the inconveniences of the way, or deluded by the suggestions of the world, if they have not altogether forsaken the path of life, have proceeded in it with so much irresolution and weakness, that, at the conclusion of their course, it has remained a matter of

(d) 2 Tim. iii. 10—12. iv. 5, 6.

of much uncertainty, whether they have reached, or fallen short of, the mark of their high calling. With M. de la Fléchère it was wholly the reverse. The resolution, that at first engaged him to enter upon the christian course, appeared, not only without any diminution, but with increasing vigor, through the several stages of his rapid progress. He outran the most zealous of his companions, he overtook many, who were steadily persevering in *the path of life*, and appeared at the head of those, who were pressing after the highest attainable states of sanctity and grace. From the commencement, to the conclusion of his pilgrimage, there was never once perceived in him the least imaginable tendency to a loitering or lukewarm disposition: if he was not every moment actually upon the stretch after spiritual improvement, he was observed, at least, with *his loins girded, his shoes on his feet, and his staff in his hand*. The fervor of his spirit was a silent but sharp reproof to the negligent and unfaithful: and so perfectly averse was he to every species of trifling, that no man of a light or indolent spirit could possibly associate with him for any length of time.

As he approached the end of his course, the graces he had kept in continual exercise for so long a season, became more illustrious and powerful: his faith was more assured, his hope more lively, his charity more abundant, his humility more profound, and his resignation more complete. *Planted, at an early age, in the house of the Lord, he flourished in the courts of our God through all the remaining years of his life, growing up like a palm-tree, and spreading abroad*

abroad like a cedar in Lebanon: and if the fruit that he brought forth in his age was not more plenteous than that, which he had produced in former years, (which was surely impossible) yet it was more happily matured, and more equally distributed among his luxuriant branches. To those, who were intimately conversant with him at this season, he appeared as a scholar of the highest attainments in the school of Christ; or rather, as a regenerate spirit in his latest state of preparation for the Kingdom of God: and this extraordinary eminence in grace was discoverable in him, not from any high external professions of sanctity, but from that *meekness of wisdom*, that *purity of conversation*, and that *lowliness of mind*, by which his whole carriage was uniformly distinguished.

For some years before his decease, he expressed a continual desire, that his labors and his life might be terminated together: and with respect to his resigned prayer in this matter, the assertion of the Psalmist was strikingly verified — *The Lord will fulfil the desire of them that fear him*. His zeal for the glory of God appeared with undiminished fervor, and his diligence in filling up the duties of his vocation continued with unabating vigor, till within a few days of his removal into Abraham's bosom. Instead of out-living his zeal and diligence in the best of causes, it may truly be said, that he fell an honorable martyr to his indefatigable exertions in the service of the church; since it was from the beds of the diseased and the dying, that he brought away with him the infectious distemper, which put
so

so unexpected a period to his labors. But even after the symptoms of this distemper had appeared sufficiently alarming to awaken the apprehensions of his friends, they were unable, either to damp his zeal, or to controul his activity: his declining sun was to set, not in obscurity and confusion, but with that mild and steady lustre, which might betoken something of its future glory.

On the sabbath day, preceding that, on which he entered into rest, I called upon him in the morning with an earnest request, that he would permit me, if not to take the whole of his duty on that day, at least to share it with him. But this he would by no means be prevailed upon to suffer, assuring me, with an air of holy confidence, which I shall never forget, that God would sufficiently strengthen him to go through the duties of the day. This was his last appearance in public; and several of my dearest friends, who were present upon this memorable occasion, were affected, beyond all description, with the melancholy circumstances of the day. He opened the reading service with apparent strength; but, before he had proceeded far in it, his countenance changed, his speech began to falter, and it was with the utmost difficulty, that he could keep himself from fainting. Every eye was rivetted upon him, deep solicitude was painted in every face, and confused murmurs of distress ran through the whole congregation. In the midst of this affecting scene, Mrs. Fléchère was seen pressing through the crowd, and earnestly entreating her dying husband no longer to attempt, what ap-

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peared to be utterly impracticable. But he, as tho' conscious that he was engaged in his last public work, mildly refused to be entreated; and, struggling against an almost insupportable languor, constrained himself to continue the service. In the course of his sermon, the idea of his weakness was almost lost in the freedom and energy, with which he delivered himself. Mercy was the subject of his discourse: and while he expatiated upon this glorious attribute of the Deity, its unsearchable extent, its eternal duration, and its astonishing effects, he appeared to be carried above all the fears and feelings of mortality. There was something in his appearance and manner, that gave his word an irresistible influence upon this solemn occasion. An awful concern was awakened through the whole assembly, and every one's heart was uncommonly moved. Upon the hearts of his friends, in particular, a most affecting impression was made at this season: and what deepened that impression was the sad *presentiment*, they read in each others countenance, of their pastor's approaching dissolution. The same affecting scene was renewed, with additional solemnity, at the altar; where his people beheld him offering up the last languid remains of a life, that had been lavishly spent in their service. In going through this last part of his duty, he was exhausted again and again: but his spiritual vigor triumphed over his bodily weakness. After several times sinking upon the sacramental table, he still resumed his sacred work, and cheerfully distributed, with his dying hand, the love-memorials of his dying Lord. In the

the course of this concluding office, which he performed by means of the most astonishing exertions, he delivered many affectionate exhortations to his people, calling upon them, at intervals, to celebrate the mercy of God in short songs of adoration and praise. And now, having struggled through a service of near four hours continuance, he was supported, with blessings in his mouth, from the altar to his chamber, where he lay for some time in a swoon, and from whence he never walked into the world again.

Such was the last ministerial labor of this unwearied pastor, who left behind him this, among many other proofs, that his zeal and diligence continued to the end of his days, undiminished by the pressure of disease, and unrestrained by the approaches of death.

T R A I T X L.

HIS TRIUMPH OVER THE EVILS OF LIFE, AND THE TERRORS OF DEATH.

THE living faith, that sustains a good pastor, or a believer in Christ, amid all the difficulties and afflictions of life, causes him more especially to triumph at the approach of death in all its terrific appearances. Ever filled with an humble confidence in him, who is the *Resurrection* and
the

the Life, he frequently expresses the assurance of his victorious faith, at this solemn season, in the manner of St. Paul: *Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ (a). Knowing, that he, who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you; therefore, we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (b).*

Thus holding up the shield of faith, to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one, and to receive the piercing arrows of the angel of death, he expects his last hour without fear or impatience; cheerfully leaving the time, the place, the manner, and the circumstances of this concluding trial, to the disposal of that God, whose wisdom, goodness, and power, are all combined to insure him the victory. Whether he is called by the providence of God, in a chamber, or upon a scaffold, to taste the bitter cup, of which his Master drank so deeply, he prepares himself to accompany a suffering Saviour, encouraged with the hope, that he shall not be tempted above his strength, and that, if he suffers and dies with the King of glory, he shall also rise and reign together with him.

Vol. I.

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(a) 2 Cor. ii. 14. (b) 2 Cor. iv. 14—17.

At length the fatal shaft is thrown, whether by accident, by disease, or by the hand of an executioner is of little consequence; the true christian, prepared for all events, fees and submits to the order of providence. He receives the mortal blow, either with *humble resignation*, or with *holy joy*. In the first case, his soul is sweetly disengaged from its earthly tabernacle, while he breathes out the supplicatory language of happy Simeon: *Lord, 'now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* But in the second case, he leaves the world in a state of holy triumph, crying out in the fullest assurance of faith—my persuasion takes place of sight, and without the help of vision I endure, as seeing him that is invisible; as effectually sustained, as though contemplating with Stephen an open Heaven, I saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, ready to save and glorify my soul.

Of these two manners of holy dying, the most enviable appears to have been the lot of St. Paul, if we may judge from the anticipated triumph he describes in several of his epistles, and particularly in the last he addressed to Timothy from Rome, where he received the crown of martyrdom. *I desire to depart and to be with Christ, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto*

unto his death (c). *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: to whom be glory for ever and ever (d). Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or the sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him, that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus (e). O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (f).*

Thus the great Apostle went forth to meet his last trial, counting it an honor to suffer in the cause of truth, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. The enemies of christianity rendered him at last conformable to Christ in his death * :

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(c) Phil. i. 13. iii. 8—10. (d) 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, 18.

(e) Rom viii. 35—39. (f) 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.

* Tradition informs us, that St. Paul in the second journey he made to Rome, received the crown of martyrdom under the emperor Nero, about thirty-five years after the crucifixion of our blessed Lord. St. Clement, the cotemporary of St. Paul, speaks of that Apostle in the following terms, in his first epistle to the Corinthians. "By means of jealousy, Paul has received the prize of perseverance. Hav-

but while they severed his head from his body, they united his happy spirit more intimately to that exalted Jesus, who had once met him in the way, and who now was waiting to receive him, at the end of his course. Happy are the faithful, who, like this faithful Apostle, live unto the Lord! yet happier they, who, like him, are enabled to die unto the Lord! *Their works do follow them, while they rest from their labors, and wait, in peace, the resurrection, and the sublime rewards of the righteous.*

NOTE XXIX.

AFTER having manifested so much resolution and constancy in fighting *the good fight of faith*, it is no wonder, that M. de la Flechère was permitted to *finish his course with joy*, and that the concluding scenes of his warfare were peculiarly triumphant and glorious. Equally prepared for every event, he met his last great trial with all that composure and steadiness, which had invariably distinguished him upon every former occasion of suffering. He entered *the valley of the shadow of death*, as one who feared no evil. He considered it as the high road

ing been seven times in bonds; having been evil-entreated and stoned; having preached in the east and in the west, he has obtained the glorious prize of his faith. After having instructed all the world in righteousness, coming into the west, he has suffered martyrdom under those, who command; and thus quitting the world, after having shewn in it a great example of patience, he is gone into the holy place."

road to that incorruptible inheritance, which is reserved for the saints, and, looking forward with a hope full of immortality, he saw, beyond its limited gloom, those everlasting hills of light and glory, to which his soul aspired. A few days before his dissolution, he appeared to have reached that desirable point, where the last rapturous discoveries are made to the souls of dying saints. Roused, as it were, with the shouts of angels, and kindled into rapture with visions of glory, he broke into a song of holy triumph, which began and ended with the praises of God's unfathomable love. He labored to declare the secret manifestations he enjoyed; but his sensations were too powerful for utterance: and after looking inexpressible things, he contented himself with calling upon all around him to celebrate and shout out that *adorable love*, which can never be fully comprehended or adequately expressed. This triumphant frame of mind was not a transient feeling, but a state that he continued to enjoy with little or no discernible interruption to the moment of his death. While he possessed the power of speech, he spake as one, whose lips had been touched with *a live coal from the altar*; and, when deprived of that power, his countenance discovered, that he was sweetly engaged in the contemplation of eternal things. On the day of his departure, as I was preparing to attend my own church, which was at the distance of nine miles from Madeley, I received a hasty message from Mrs. de la Fléchère, requesting my immediate attendance at the vicarage. I instantly followed the messenger, and found M. de la Fléchère with every symptom.

symptom of approaching dissolution upon him. I had ever looked up to this man of God with an extraordinary degree of affection and reverence ; and on this afflicting occasion my heart was uncommonly affected and depressed. It was now in vain to recollect, that public duty required my presence in another place : unfitted for every duty, except that of silently watching the bed of death, I found it impossible to withdraw from the solemn scene to which I had been summoned. I had received from this evangelical teacher, in days that were past, many excellent precepts with respect to *holy living* ; and now I desired to receive from him the last important lesson with respect to *holy dying*. And truly this concluding lesson was of inestimable worth, since so much patience and resignation, so much peace and composure, were scarcely ever discovered in the same circumstances before — *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his !*

While their pastor was breathing out his soul into the hands of a *faithful Creator*, his people were offering up their joint supplications on his behalf in the house of God. Little however was seen among them on that trying occasion, but affliction and tears. Indeed it was a day much to be remembered for the many affecting testimonies of distress, which appeared on every side. The whole village wore an air of consternation and sadness, and not one joyful song was heard among all its inhabitants — Hasty messengers were passing to and fro with anxious enquiries and confused reports — And the members of every family sat together in silence that day awaiting, with trembling expectation, the issue of every

every hour. After the conclusion of evening service, several of the poor, who came from distant parts, and who were usually entertained under M. de la Fléchère's roof, still lingered about the house, and seemed unable to tear themselves away from the place, without a sight of their expiring pastor. Secretly informed of their desire, I obtained them the permission they wished. And the door of the chamber being set open, immediately before which M. de la Fléchère was sitting upright in his bed with the curtains undrawn, unaltered in his usual venerable appearance, they slowly moved one by one along the gallery, severally pausing as they passed by the door, and casting in a look of mingled supplication and anguish. It was, indeed, an affecting sight, to behold these unfeigned mourners successively presenting themselves before the bed of their dying benefactor, with an inexpressible eagerness in their looks, and then dragging themselves away from his presence, with a distressing consciousness, *that they should see his face no more.*

And now the hour speedily approached, that was to put a solemn termination to our hopes and fears. His weakness very perceptibly increased, but his countenance continued unaltered to the last. If there was any visible change in his feelings, he appeared more at ease and more sweetly composed, as the moment of his dismissal drew near. Our eyes were rivetted upon him in awful expectation. But, whatever we had felt before, no murmuring thought was suffered, at this interesting period, to darken the glories of this illustrious scene. All was silence—when the last angelic messenger suddenly arrived,

and performed his important commission with so much stillness and secrecy, that it was impossible to determine the exact moment of its completion. Mrs. de la Fléchère was kneeling by the side of her departing husband; one who had attended him with uncommon assiduity, during the last stages of his distemper, sat at his head; while I sorrowfully waited near his feet. Uncertain, whether or not he was totally separated from us, we pressed nearer, and hung over the bed in the attitude of listening attention: his lips had ceased to move, and his head was gently sinking upon his bosom—we stretched out our hands, but his *warfare was accomplished*, and the happy spirit had taken its everlasting flight.

Such was the undisturbed and triumphant death of this eminently holy and laborious pastor, who entered into rest on the evening of Sunday, August 14th, 1785. Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord! *They rest from their painful labors*, and are followed by those exemplary works, which they considered as unworthy a place in their remembrance: *they escape from the windy storm and tempest*, and are brought to their desired haven: *they have a right to the tree of life, they enter in through the gates into the city*, and stand with everlasting acceptance in the presence of God. On Sunday the 21st, a public tribute of respect was paid to the memory of this great man, in a funeral sermon delivered in the parish church of Madeley, by the Reverend Thomas Hatton, Rector of Waters-Upton, who, in speaking from Hebrews xiii. and 7, addressed a numerous and deeply affected auditory in terms peculiarly adapted to the solemnity of the occasion.

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THE
P O R T R A I T
O F
LUKEWARM MINISTERS,
A N D
FALSE APOSTLES.

O 5

LUKEWARM MINISTERS

FALSE APOSTLES

20

CHAPTER I.

*THE PORTRAIT OF LUKEWARM
MINISTERS.*

THE essence of painting consists in a happy mixture of light and shade, from the contrast of which an admirable effect is produced, and the animated figure made to rise from the canvass. Upon this principle we shall oppose to the portrait of St. Paul, that of lukewarm ministers and false apostles, whose gloomy traits will form a background peculiarly adapted to set off the character of an evangelical pastor.

If the primitive church was disturbed and misled by unfaithful ministers, it may be reasonably presumed, that, in this more degenerate period of its existence, the church of God must be miserably overrun with teachers of the same character. There is, however, no small number of ministers, who form a kind of medium between zealous pastors and false apostles. These irresolute evangelists are sincere to a certain point. They have some desire after the things of God, but are abundantly more solicitous for the things of the world: They form good resolutions in

the cause of their acknowledged Master, but are timid and unfaithful, when called upon actual service. They are sometimes actuated by a momentary zeal, but generally influenced by servile fear. They have no experience of that ardent affection and that invincible courage, with which St. Paul was animated. Their *wisdom* is still *carnal* (a): they still confer *with flesh and blood* (b). Such was Aaron, who yielded, through an unmanly weakness, to the impious solicitations of his people. Such was Jonah, when he refused to exercise his ministry at Nineveh. That this prophet was possessed of a confidence in God, and a desire for the salvation of his fellow-creatures, we have every reason to believe: but we find, that neither the one, nor the other, was sufficiently powerful to engage him in a service, which appeared likely to endanger his reputation among men. Such were also the Apostles before they were endued with power from on high. To every pastor of this character, that expression of Christ, which was once addressed to the most courageous man among his disciples, may be considered as peculiarly applicable: *Thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things, that be of God, but those, that be of men* (c).

Lukewarmness, false prudence and timidity, are the chief characteristicks, by which ministers of

(a) 2 Cor. i, 12, (b) Gal. i, 16, (c) Matt. xvi, 23.

of this class may be distinguished. Perceiving the excellence of the Gospel in an obscure point of view, and having little experience of its astonishing effects, they cannot possibly discover that religious zeal, which is indispensibly necessary to the character they affect to sustain.

The pious Bishop Massillon gives the following representation of these unqualified teachers, and the ill effects of their unfaithfulness. "Man-
 "ners are every day becoming more corrupt
 "among us, because the zeal of ministers is
 "daily becoming colder; and because there are
 "found among us few apostolical men, who op-
 "pose themselves, as a brazen wall, to the tor-
 "rent of vice. For the most part, we behold
 "the wicked altogether at ease in their sins, for
 "the want of hearing more frequently those
 "thundering voices, which, accompanied with
 "the Spirit of God, would effectually rouse
 "them from their awful slumber. The
 "want of zeal, so clearly discernible among
 "pastors, is chiefly owing to that base timidity
 "which is not hardy enough to make a resolute
 "stand against common prejudice, and which
 "regards the worthless approbation of men,
 "beyond their eternal interests. That must
 "needs be a worldly and criminal consideration,
 "which makes us more anxious for our own
 "glory, than for the glory of God. That must
 "truly be fleshly wisdom, which can represent
 "religious

“ religious zeal under the false ideas of excess,
“ indiscretion and temerity : a pretext this, which
“ nearly extinguishes every spark of zeal in the
“ generality of ministers. This want of courage
“ they honor with the specious names of mode-
“ ration and prudence. Under pretence of not
“ carrying their zeal to an excess, they are con-
“ tent to be entirely destitute of it. And while
“ they are solicitous to shun the rocks of im-
“ prudence and precipitation, they run, without
“ fear, upon the sands of indolence and cowar-
“ dice. They desire to become useful to sinners,
“ and, at the same time, to be had in estimation
“ by them. They long to manifest such a zeal
“ as the world is disposed to applaud. They
“ are anxious so to oppose the passions of men,
“ that they may yet secure their praises ; so
“ to condemn the vices they love, that they
“ may still be approved by those they condemn.
“ But when we probe a wound to the bottom,
“ we must expect to awaken a degree of peevish-
“ ness in the patient, if we do not extort from
“ him some bitter exclamation.”

“ Let us not deceive ourselves,” continues the
same author ; “ if that apostolical zeal, which
“ once converted the world, is become so rare
“ among us, it is because, in the discharge of
“ our sacred functions, we seek ourselves, rather
“ than the glory of Christ, and the salvation of
“ souls. Glory and infamy were regarded by
“ the

“ the Apostle with equal indifference, while he
 “ filled up the duties of his important office. He
 “ knew it impossible to please men, and to save
 “ them; to be the servant of the world, and
 “ the servant of Christ. Nevertheless, there are
 “ many among us, who are seeking to unite
 “ these different services, which the Apostle be-
 “ lieved to be irreconcilable.”

Monf. Roques agrees with the pious Bishop
 in condemning those ministers, who neglect to
 copy the example of St. Paul. “ The little
 “ piety, that is to be found among ministers,”
 says this excellent writer, “ is the most effectual
 “ obstacle to the progress of the Gospel. By
 “ piety, I mean that sincere and ardent love
 “ for religion, which deeply interests a man in
 “ all its concerns, as well as in every thing, that
 “ respects the glory of God, and of our Lord
 “ Jesus Christ. If this divine love was found
 “ reigning in the hearts of those, who proclaim
 “ Christ; if every preacher of the Gospel was
 “ enabled to say with the sincerity of Peter,
 “ *Lord! thou knowest all things; thou knowest that*
 “ *I love thee* (d): thou knowest, that I have no
 “ ambition but for thy glory, and that my highest
 “ pleasure consists in beholding the increase of
 “ thy Kingdom — we should then perceive the
 “ word of God in their hands, like a two-edged
 “ sword, cutting asunder the very deepest roots
 “ of

(d) John xxi. 15.

“ of sin. But as the Gospel is preached more
 “ through contention, through vain glory, and
 “ through the desire of getting a livelihood by
 “ serving at the altar, than through an ardent
 “ zeal to advance the glory of God; hence it
 “ is, that ministers fall into various errors, giving
 “ evident proofs of that indolence and unconcern,
 “ which afford matter of scandal rather than of
 “ edification (e).”

Monf. Ostervald speaks the same language in
 his *Third source of the corruption, which reigns*
among christians.

“ A great part of our eccle-
 “ siasticks,” lays this writer, “ may be justly
 “ charged with the corruption of the people,
 “ since there are among them many, who oppose
 “ the re-establishment of a holy discipline, while
 “ others render the exercise of it totally useless,
 “ by an ill-timed softness, and a shameful in-
 “ dulgence.”

“ I except those,” continues this venerable
 pastor, “ who ought to be excepted. But, on
 “ a general view, in what do ecclesiasticks differ
 “ from other men? Do they distinguish themselves
 “ by an exemplary life? Their exterior, indeed,
 “ is somewhat different: They lead a more re-
 “ tired life; they, in some degree, save appearan-
 “ ces; though all do not go thus far. But, be-
 “ yond this, are they not equally attached to
 “ the world, as much engaged with earthly things,

“ as

(e) Evangelical Pastor.

“ as wholly taken up with secular views, as constantly actuated by interest and passion, as the generality of mankind ?”

Christian prudence required, that these portraits of lukewarm ministers should be exhibited, as the designs of pastors, who have been eminent for their piety, their rank, and experience, and who, on that account, had a peculiar right to declare those truths, which might give greater offence, were they to come from less respectable persons.

CHAP. II.

THE PORTRAIT OF FALSE APOSTLES.

BETWEEN the state of careless ministers, and false apostles, there is not, in reality, so vast a difference, as many are apt to imagine. An unworthy laborer in the spiritual vineyard, gives speedy proofs of a lukewarm temper, in the service of his Lord ; shortly after, his heart becomes entirely cold with respect to piety ; and what is still more lamentable, he frequently manifests as warm a zeal for error and vice, as the true minister can possibly discover in the cause of truth and virtue. Such is the state of those who may properly be termed preachers of the
third

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third class, and who are spoken of by St. Paul under the title of *false apostles* (a).

These unworthy ministers are known by their works. Like many of St. Paul's unfaithful fellow-laborers (b), they prefer the repose and pleasure of the world, before the service and reproach of Christ. Like Judas and Simon the forcerer, they love the honors and revenues of ministers, while they abhor the crosses and labors of the ministry. Like Hophni and Phinehas, they are *sons of Belial, and know not the Lord. Their sin is very great before the Lord: for, on their account, many abhor the offering of the Lord* (c). Like the wicked servant, described by their reputed Master, instead of providing *meat for his household in due season, they begin to smite, or to persecute those of their fellow-servants, who are intent upon discharging their several duties; while they pass away their time in mirth and festivity with the riotous and the drunken* (d). They may justly be compared to lamps extinguished in the temple of God. "Instead of shining there to his praise," says Bishop Massillon, "they emit black clouds of smoke, which obscure every object about them, and become a favour of death to those, who perish. They are pillars of the sanctuary, which being overthrown and scattered in public places, become stones

(a) 2 Cor. xi. 13. (b) 2 Tim. i. 15. (c) 1 Sam. ii. 12, 17.

(d) Matt. xxiv. 48, 49.

“ stones of stumbling to every heedless passenger.
 “ They are the salt of the earth, and were ap-
 “ pointed to preserve souls from corruption ; but
 “ having lost all their savour, they begin to cor-
 “ rupt what they were intended to preserve.”

They are physicians, who carry to their patients infection instead of health. From the spiritually diseased, they withhold the healing *word* of God (e), while they distribute among them the dangerous poison of a lax morality, setting before them an example of bitter zeal *against the truth*, puffing them up with that *wisdom, which is earthly, sensual, and devilish* (f).

“ A false pastor,” says Mons. Roques, or a false apostle, “ is a minister whose heart is not
 “ right before God, and who lives not in such
 “ a manner as to edify his flock. He knows
 “ the holy course of life, to which christians in
 “ general, and ministers in particular, are called ;
 “ but, in spite of all his knowledge and his apparent
 “ zeal, he fears not to trample under foot those
 “ very maxims of the Gospel, which he has
 “ publicly established and preached with the ut-
 “ most energy. Every day he performs acts of
 “ the most detestable hypocrisy. Every time he
 “ preaches and censures, he bears open testimony
 “ against his own conduct : but he publicly ac-
 “ cuses, without ever intending to correct him-
 “ self. He is a constant declaimer against vice,
 “ in

(e) Psalm cvii. 20. (f) James iii. 14, 15.

“ in the pulpit ; but a peculiar protector of it,
“ while he is engaged in the common concerns
“ of life. While he exhorts his hearers to re-
“ pentance, he either imagines himself above
“ those laws, which he proposes to others on the
“ part of God ; or he believes himself under
“ no other necessity of holding them forth, ex-
“ cept his known engagement to such a work,
“ and the salary he receives for the performance
“ of it.”

Monf. Ostervald, in a work already referred to, makes mention of these pastors in the following terms. “ How many do we see, who regard
“ their holy vocation in no other light, than
“ the means of procuring for them a comfort-
“ able maintenance. Are there not many, who
“ bring a scandal upon their profession, by the
“ licentiousness of their manners ? Do we not
“ see them hasty and outrageous ? Do we not ob-
“ serve in them an extreme attachment to their
“ own interests ? Are they careful to rule their
“ families well ? Has it not been a subject
“ of complaint, that they are puffed up with
“ pride, and are implacable in their hatred ? I
“ say nothing of many other vices and defects,
“ which are equally scandalous in the clergy,
“ such as vain and loose conversation, an attach-
“ ment to diversion and pleasure, a worldly dis-
“ position, slothfulness, craft, injustice, and slan-
“ der.”

“ It

“It is impossible to find a person,” adds Monf. Oftervald, “furrounded with more powerful motives to piety, than a man, whose ordinary occupation is to meditate upon religious things, to difcours of them among others, to reprove vice and hypocrify, to perform divine fervice, to adminifter the holy facraments, to vifit the afflicted and the dying; and who must one day render to God an account of the fouls committed to his charge. I know not, whether it be poffible to find any ftronger marks of impiety and hypocrify, than thofe, which may be difcovered in the character of a perfon, who, in the midft of all thefe favorable circumftances, is, nevertheless, an unrighteous man. Such a one may be faid to divert himfelf with the moft facred things of religion, and to fpend the whole of his life in performing the part of an impoftor.— And this he does to his coft; fince there is no profefion in the world, that will more effectually fecure a fentence of condemnation, than that of the priefthood, when exercifed in fo unfaithful a manner.”

But it is chiefly in the holy fcriptures, where thefe unworthy paftors are pourtrayed in fo ftrong a point of view, that every attentive enquirer may readily difcern their diftinguifhing features.

Son of man, *faith the Lord,*
prophefy againft the fhepherds of Ifrael, and fay
unto

unto them : Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them, that are fed ; but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye bound up that, which was broken, neither have ye brought again that, which was driven away, neither have ye sought that, which was lost : but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold I am against the shepherds : and I will require my flock at their hand (g). As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth : men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith (h). Woe unto them ; for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gain-saying of Korah. Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds, trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots ; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame ; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever (i).

St. John has not only drawn the character, but has likewise given us the name of a certain tyrannical teacher, who began to disturb the peace of the primitive church. *I wrote unto the church,* saith he to Gaius, concerning the reception of stranger evangelists ; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. If I come, I will remember his deeds, which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words :
and

(g) Ezek. xxxiv. 2—10. (h) 2 Tim. iii. 8. (i) Jude 11, 12.

and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church (k). Behold a striking description of proud and persecuting ecclesiasticks !

But, perhaps, the most complete description of these persons is given by our Lord himself, where he treats of worthless pastors, in general, under the particular names of scribes and pharisees. Here, a divine and impartial hand delineates the jealousy, the pride, the feigned morality, the malice, and the persecuting spirit, which characterize this class of men in every age of the world.

Do not ye, faith Christ, after their works : for they say and do not. All their works they do to be seen of men. They love the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. Woe unto you, hypocrites ! for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men : ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them, that are entering, to go in. Ye neglect judgment, mercy and faith. Ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Because ye garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, ye vainly imagine yourselves free from a persecuting spirit, while in other matters, as the children of them, which killed the prophets, ye are laboring to fill up the measure of your fathers. Behold I send unto you prophets and zealous preachers of

(k) John 3d Epistle.

of the word, and some of them ye shall kill, and some of them ye shall persecute from city to city (1).

We need take but a cursory view of the new testament, for sufficient proof, that these worldly-minded scribes and these furious bigots above represented, were the very persons, who pursued the first evangelists with such deadly rancor. Nay, had it not been for Annas and Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate would silently have permitted the preaching of Jesus himself. These who were the chief men in the state, after refusing to embrace the word of God, on their own part, would most probably have contented themselves, with denying its truths, and ridiculing its followers: but they would never have passed a sentence of death, upon persons of so admirable a character, as Christ and his forerunner.

The peculiar opposers of Jesus and his disciples, were powerfully influenced by jealous pride; and with the same malignant disposition, every false apostle in the christian church is deeply infected. The prelate, whose pen we have already borrowed, gives the following lively description of this unhappy temper.

“ This despicable jealousy not only dishonors zeal, but sup-
 “ poses it extinguished in the heart. It is an
 “ infamous disposition, which afflicts itself even
 “ for the conversion of sinners, and for the pro-
 “ gress of the Gospel, when it is through the
 “ ministry

(1) Matt. xxiii. 3-34.

“ministry of others, that God is pleased to
 “work these miracles. The glory of God sel-
 “dom interests us so much, as when our own
 “glory appears to be mingled with his. We
 “endure, with some kind of regret, that God
 “should be glorified: and I will dare to add,
 “that some of us could behold our brethren
 “perishing, with pleasure, rather than see them
 “rescued from death, by other labors and other
 “talents than our own. St. Paul rejoiced to
 “see the Gospel spread abroad, though it were
 “by the ministry of those, who sought to dis-
 “grace him among the faithful; and Moses
 “desired, that all his brethren might receive
 “the gift of prophecy: but we are anxious to
 “stand alone, and to share with no person the
 “glory and success of the holy ministry. Every
 “thing that eclipses our own brightness, or
 “shines too near us, becomes insupportable,
 “and we appear to regard the gifts of God in
 “others, merely as a shame and reproach to
 “ourselves.”

Observe here the true source
 of those specious pretexts, which are professedly
 drawn from the order, the customs, and even
 from the prejudices of the world: pretexts under
 which we dare to oppose the zeal of our brethren,
 to withstand the word of God in its course, and
 to render the cross of the ministry more burthen-
 some to those, who carry it further than we are
 disposed to do. One distinguishing mark of

these turbulent evangelists, is that of being thorns in the sides of true ministers, whom they never fail to represent as deceivers or novices, causing the truest piety to wear the semblance of enthusiasm and folly. *They speak evil of the things they understand not* (m): and by the most malicious discourses, which have always an appearance of zeal for religion and order, they are gradually rousing anew that spirit of persecution, by which the name of Christ has been so universally disgraced in the world.

In the earliest age of the christian church, these false apostles, swelling with envy at the success of more faithful ministers, made use of every effort to render them contemptible, by giving false representations of their holy zeal and their exemplary actions. Thus they accused St. Paul of walking *according to the flesh*; and asserted, that though *his letters were weighty and powerful*, yet *his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible* (n). Nay, so anxious were they in seeking occasions for offence in the conduct of this Apostle, that he believed himself obliged, in the end, publicly to expose them — *These are false apostles*, says he, *deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing, if his ministers also be transformed, as the ministers of*

(m) 2 Pet. ii. 12. 2 Cor. x. 2—10.

of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (o). As our Lord foresaw, that these strenuous opposers of real religion, would bring his church to the very brink of ruin, he exhorted his disciples continually to stand upon their guard against them (p). And the Apostles, after steadily following their Master's important advice, were diligent in transmitting it to the latest of their followers (q).

One necessary remark shall conclude this chapter. In the portrait of St. Paul, we have seen that of an *evangelical pastor*: in the preceding chapter, we have marked the character of a *careless minister*; and in this, we behold the faithful representation of a *false apostle*. Let us remember, that one of these three portraits must agree, more or less, with every preacher of the Gospel. I say *more or less*, because the various traits here marked out, may be varied to an almost inconceivable degree. Moreover so inconstant is man, that a minister, who to-day is possessed of zeal sufficient to rank him with preachers of the first class, may to-morrow, by an unhappy remissness, sink into the second, as once did John whose surname was Mark; or even into the third, as Hymeneus and Philetus, Diotrophes and Demas. On the contrary, a man, who now discovers many of those traits, by which

P 2

Saul

(o) 2 Cor. xi. 13—15. (p) Matt. vii. 15. (q) Acts xx. 28, 30.
2 Pet. ii. 1.

Saul the pharisee was once distinguished, may, ere long, become an humble imitator of the zeal and charity of Paul the Apostle.

CHAP. III.

AN ANSWER TO THE FIRST OBJECTION, WHICH MAY BE MADE AGAINST THE PORTRAIT OF ST. PAUL.

OBJECTIONS are the ordinary weapons, with which error makes war upon truth, and these are sometimes so powerful, that till they are effectually repelled, we see truth deprived of its rights. The first, that will probably be advanced against the portrait of St. Paul, is this: *The model placed before us is too exalted for those, who are not endued with the miraculous gifts of St. Paul.*

To this and every other objection, we shall offer a variety of replies, in as concise a manner as possible. To the present objection, a sufficient answer has been already returned by a truly respectable author. "This excuse," says Mons. Roques, "might have some weight, if in proposing the example of Christ to persons, who are honored with the holy ministry, we in-

" sifted

"sifted upon their keeping pace with the Savior
 "of mankind. But this excuse is altogether
 "frivolous, when nothing more is required of
 "ministers, than continually to place Christ as
 "a model before their eyes, and to imitate him
 "with all the exactness of which they are capa-
 "ble." "This excuse," continues he, "is
 "still more unreasonable, when applied to Pro-
 "phets and Apostles, who were men of like
 "passions with ourselves; and who, of conse-
 "quence, may be placed before us as models,
 "whose perfections are attainable by means of
 "the very same succours, which supported them,
 "and which are never refused to those, who have
 "sincere and apostolical intentions (a)."

To the answer of this pious divine, we shall add a few observations.

1. In the Portrait of St. Paul there is found no large description of miraculous gifts, but a faithful representation of those christian virtues which are found in every believer, according to his vocation, and without which, it is impossible for us to fill up our several duties—such as *humility, faith, charity, zeal, and assiduity*.

2. The morality, which was practised by St. Paul, was no other than the morality of the Gospel, which is the same in every age, and for every condition: whence it follows, that the moral character of this Apostle, belongs not only to all true

P 3

pastors

(a) Evangelical Pastor.

pastors, but even to every *sincere believer*. If St. Paul was truly humble, charitable, and pious, his humility, his charity, and his piety, are as essential to the religion of every christian; as three angles are essential to the nature of every triangle. It is granted, that the piety of this Apostle was greater than that of a thousand other ministers, just as one triangle may be greater than that of a thousand others. But as the angles of the most diminutive triangle, are of the same quality with those, which compose a triangle of uncommon magnitude, so the moral character of St. Paul is, with regard to essentials, the moral character of every true christian.

3. This Apostle informs us, that he was obliged to *keep his body in subjection, lest after having preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away* (b). This single acknowledgement sufficiently proves, that he was exposed to all those dangers with which christians are generally beset, and that he saw no way of escaping them, but by the use of those very precautions, which the weakest believer is instructed to take. Now, if St. Paul was so fearful of falling away; if St. Peter was really seen to stumble and fall; and if Judas, an elected Apostle, irremediably plunged himself into the depths of perdition: it is but reasonable to suppose, that, by a faithful improvement of our privileges, we may attain to a good degree of that
exalted

(b) 1 Cor. ix. 27.

exalted piety, from which one Apostle fell for a season, and another for ever.

4. In the whole Portrait of St. Paul, there is not a stronger trait than the eighteenth, which describes the ardor of his love for the Jews, who pursued him even to death: a *love*, that made him willing to be accursed in dying for them, as his gracious Master had been in dying for the world. Now this charity is so far from being an attainment too exalted for true ministers, that it is indiscriminately required of every professing christian. *Hereby*, saith St. John, *perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren* (c). And our Lord himself hath said, *By this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another* (d).

It is by a new commandment to this effect, that the morality of the Gospel is peculiarly distinguished from that of the law. And shall we impiously attempt to enervate evangelical morality? Let us rather declare, upon all occasions, that *He who loveth not, knoweth not God* (e). Let us cry out with the Apostle — *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha*: and if a man love not his brethren, he loves not the Lord Jesus; *for he that loveth not his*

P 4

(c) 1 John iii. 16. (d) John xiii. 35. (e) 1 John iv. 8.

his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen (f).

On the other hand, when we love our brethren with a pure heart fervently (g); when, disposed to universal benevolence, we can look upon our very enemies with sentiments of pity and affection; we are then assuredly possessed of *that christian charity*, which forms the most brilliant trait in the moral character of St. Paul.

5. St. Paul was for three years the resident pastor of a single church. The city of Ephesus was his parish: and while he resided there, he gave an example, which every minister, by the most solemn engagements, is bound to follow; whether he be commissioned to labor in a city or a village. During two other years of his life, this Apostle was confined within narrower limits than any pastor of a parish. Shut up at Rome in a house, that served him for a prison, and constantly guarded by a soldier, he was unable to extend the sphere of his labors. Yet, even in these circumstances, he continued in the diligent exercise of the holy ministry, *preaching the Kingdom of God, to all them, that came in unto him, and teaching those things, which concern the Lord Jesus Christ* (h).

Surely nothing can appear more perfectly reasonable, than that every pastor should discover

as

(f) 1 Cor. xvi. 22. 1 John iv. 20.

(g) 1 Pet. i. 22.

(h) Acts xxviii. 30.

as much zeal in his particular parish, as St. Paul was accustomed to manifest in the Roman Empire, when he was at liberty, and in his own apartment, when loaded with chains.

6. If the ardent charity and the incessant labors of St. Paul were happily imitated by Timothy, why may they not be copied by every pastor in the present day? That youthful minister was anxious to tread in the steps of this Apostle, and they, who are otherwise minded, assuredly fall under those apostolical censures, which are thus indirectly expressed in his epistle to the Philippians: *I trust to send Timotheus shortly unto you; for I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things, which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the Gospel (i).*

7. The destruction of the eastern churches commenced in the falling away of their pastors, who gradually abated in the fervors of that holy zeal, with which they had begun to labor in the vineyard of their Lord. Of such unfaithful teachers Christ affectingly complained in the earliest period of his church, and accompanied his complaints with the most terrible menaces. *Write unto the Angel of the church of Ephesus, said he to St. John, I know thy former works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them*

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which

(i) Phil. ii, 19—22.

which say they are apostles and are not; and hast found them liars, &c. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent (k).

The warning was unattended to, and, at length, the threatened blow was struck. Thus fell the church of Ephesus, and thus every church upon earth is fallen, making way for that *mystery of iniquity*, and that general apostacy, which have been so long foretold. So true is it, that apostolical charity, *that* charity which was first lighted up on the day of pentecost, is still absolutely necessary to every pastor, to every church, and, of consequence, to every believer.

From the combined force of these seven argumentative observations, we have a right to conclude, that the virtues of St. Paul are far from being inimitable, and that the first objection against his portrait is void of solidity.

the vineyard of their Lord. Of such multiplied teachers Christ officiously complained in the earliest period of his church, and accompanied his complaints with terrible denunciations. (H) Rev. ii. 2-5.

It is true the church of Ephesus did not know St. John, I know the former words, and the latter, and have been ever since the same. (I) 1st. ii. 12-13.

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

A SECOND OBJECTION ARGUED AGAINST

THEY, who follow the example of Diotriches rather than that of St. Paul, add to the preceding another objection, to discredit, if possible, the imitators of this great Apostle. *Do you pretend, say they, to be the successors of St. Paul and the other Apostles, whom you presumptuously cite as your models?*

To such objectors the following reflections will serve as a sufficient reply.

1. We have heard St. Paul, in the character of a believer, proposing himself as an example to all believers, and, as a minister of the Gospel, exhorting every pastor to tread in his steps (a).

2. John the Baptist preached repentance: The Apostles proclaimed remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ, *who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification* (b); and every true minister still continues to insist upon these important doctrines. Now, as he, who takes the place of a person deceased, is accounted the successor of such person; so these faithful

P 6

pastors

(a) 1 Cor. xi, 1. Phil. iii, 17. (b) Rom. iv, 25.

pastors should be regarded as teachers appointed to succeed both the forerunner, and the Apostles of Christ. It must be allowed, that the Apostles, as *elders* in the family of our Lord, were in possession of privileges, which we are not permitted to enjoy. But if the Gospel is unchangeable, and if the Kingdom of God still remains under its ancient form of government, the priesthood must, for the most part, of necessity, continue the same.

3. There was a time, in which the jewish priests had lost the *Urim and Thummim*, with which Aaron and his sons were at first invested. There was a time, in which God no longer manifested himself to his own appointed priests, as he had been accustomed to do. But as, notwithstanding the loss of that glory, which formerly rested upon the jewish church, every pious priest, such as Zacharias, was a true successor of Aaron; so, during the eclipse of that glory, which once illuminated the christian church, every pious minister may justly be accounted a true successor of St. Paul.

4. The word *Apostle* signifies *one who is sent*, and answers to the term *Angel* or *messenger*. Our brethren, says St. Paul, who accompany Titus, are the *messengers*, or Apostles, of the churches (c). Every minister, therefore, who carries with sincerity the messages of his Lord, may, with propriety, be ranked among his Angels or messengers

(c) 2 Cor. viii, 23.

gers. Nor do such immediately lose their title, when they neglect to perform the duties of their office. They may, like Judas, go under the name of Apostles even to their death, though utterly unworthy of such an honorable appellation. Thus, after the pastors of Ephesus and Laodicea had outlived the transient fervors of their charity and zeal, they were still addressed, as the *Angels* of their several churches. And thus St. Paul gave the title of *Apostles* to the worldly ministers of his time: in quality of ministers, they were *Apostles*; but in quality of worldly ministers, they were *false Apostles*.

5. As the name of *Cesar* is ordinarily applied to the twelve first Roman Emperors, so the name of *Apostle* is ordinarily applied to the twelve first ministers of the Gospel, who had been permitted to converse with their Lord, even after his resurrection, and to St. Paul, who was favored with a glorious manifestation of his exalted Saviour. In this confined sense, it is acknowledged, that the name of *Apostle* belongs, in an especial manner, to those, who were sent forth by Christ, after having received their consecration and commission immediately from himself. But, as the name of *Cesar*, in a more general sense, may be given to all the Emperors of Rome, so the name of *Apostle* may be applied to every minister of the everlasting Gospel. Thus Barnabas, Andronicus, and Junia, who were neither of the number of the

the twelve, nor yet of the seventy disciples, were denominated *Apostles* as well as St. Paul (d.)

6. It is the invariable opinion of slothful christians, that the zeal of ministers and the piety of believers, in the present day, must necessarily fall far below what they were in the Apostles' time: as though the promises of Christ were unhappily limited to the primitive church. This error has been frequently refuted, in vain, by a variety of christian writers, since nothing can be more conformable to that spirit of incredulity, which reigns among us, than to renounce, at once, the most important promises of the new Testament. Had the same promises been made respecting temporal honors and profits, we should see a different mode of conduct adopted: *for the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light* (e).

Mons. Roques bears the following testimony to the truth contended for in this place. "The

"ministers of the Gospel esteem themselves,
"and with reason, *the successors of the Apostles*.

"Their employment is essentially the same;

"though the Apostles were honored with many

"glorious prerogatives, as being the first to lay

"the foundation of the church."

"The minister of Christ," says the same

writer, "cannot be said vainly to flatter himself,

"when he counts upon the gracious assistance

of

(d) Acts xiv. 14. Rom. xvi. 7. (e) Luke xvi. 8.

"of his Master. He takes the promise of that
 "Master for the solid foundation of his hope.
 "*I am with you alway*, said Christ to his Apostles,
 "and, in their persons, to all those, who should
 "succeed them in the ministry, *even unto the*
 "*end of the world* (f)."

"It was this divine promise," continues he ;
 "a promise more steadfast than earth or heaven,
 "that filled the Apostles with such an ardent zeal,
 "as enabled them to rejoice evermore ; placing
 "them above the fury of tyrants, and beyond
 "the reach of fear ; assisting them to endure
 "excessive fatigue, and toilsome journeys, the in-
 "clemency of the seasons, and the resistance of
 "obdurate hearts." Impressed with a just
 sense of this important promise, the venerable
 writer concludes with this fervent prayer : "Holy
 "Jesus ! who hast promised to continue for ever
 "with thine Apostles, and to give them that
 "wisdom, which no man shall ever be able to
 "resist, give me to experience a participation of
 "these signal favors, that, animated by the *same*
 "*spirit*, with which thy first disciples were in-
 "spired, I may lead some soul a happy captive
 "to the obedience of thee." These beautiful
 quotations will make their own apology for ap-
 pearing in this place.

7. If any are disposed to condemn Mons.
 Roques, as an enthusiast in this point, they
 consider

(f) Matt. xxviii. 20.

consider not, how many great and honorable names they disgrace by such a precipitate judgment; since all those pious fathers, who are looked upon as the reformers of corrupted doctrines and degenerate manners, were unanimously of the same opinion.

From the preceding reflections, it seems but reasonable to conclude, that all the true ministers of Christ among those nations, which were formerly known by the name of gentiles, are to be considered as the true successors of the Apostles, and particularly of St. Paul, who by way of eminence is entitled the Apostle of the gentiles, and who, on that account, may, with the greater propriety, be proposed to them as a model.

CHAP. V.

A THIRD OBJECTION REPLIED TO.

THEY, who will allow neither believers nor pastors to become imitators of St. Paul, very rarely forget to propose a third objection against such imitation. *If you pretend, say they, to be the Apostles' successors, then prove your mission by the performance of miracles equal to theirs.*

To this objection we reply —

I. That

1. That no mention is made of the miracles of Andronicus, Junia, and Barnabas, who were real Apostles : nor are any miracles attributed to Titus or Timothy, though they were the undoubted *successors of the Apostles*. Further ; it is expressly said, that *John the Baptist*, though he was greater than the Prophets, *did no miracle* (a). On the other hand, some miraculous gifts were common in the church of Corinth, even among those, who were neither Apostles nor Evangelists : and these gifts were so far from being essential to apostolick zeal, that many unworthy brethren and many *false Apostles*, as well as the traitor Judas, were endued with them. This we are taught, in the most express terms, by our Lord himself (b).

2. If any of those pastors, who make a profession of following St. Paul, are observed to publish another Gospel, or to depart from the order established by the Apostles, the world has then reason to require miracles at their hand, as a demonstration, that their doctrines are divine, and that their recent customs are preferable to those, which were formerly adopted in the church of Christ. But, if they simply proclaim that glorious Gospel, which has been already confirmed by a thousand miracles, and are observed to adopt no other method than that of the Apostles ; it is absurd, in the highest degree, to insist upon

(a) John x. 41. (b) Matt. vii. 32.

upon miracles as the only sufficient evidences of their mission. From worldly pastors, such attestations of their sacred commission might, with propriety, be required. These are the persons, who turn aside from the beaten track of Christ and his disciples, both with respect to doctrine and discipline: and these should be required, by the church, to give incontestible proofs, that their novel customs are better than those of St. Paul and the ancient Evangelists.

3. No sufficient reason can be given, why the humble imitators of St. Paul should be required to evidence their spiritual mission by extraordinary actions. On the one hand, they do but simply declare those religious truths, of which they have had the most convincing experience: and, on the other, they earnestly solicit the wicked to become partakers of the same invaluable blessing. Now the certainty of such declaration, and the sincerity of such invitation, may be solidly established upon two kinds of proof: first, upon *those proofs* which support the Gospel in general: and secondly, upon the *holy conduct* of those, who bear this testimony and repeat these invitations, by which they demonstrate the efficacy of their doctrine, and indisputably prove, that true christians are *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God*

(c). That pastor, who is unable to produce the *former* proofs, cannot possibly be regarded as a
true

true successor of the great Apostle : and he, whose uniform conduct is insufficient to supply the latter, is no other than a *false Apostle*.

4. External miracles, which effect no change in the heart, nor rescue the soul from a state of spiritual blindness and death ; miracles, which serve only to repair the organs of a body, that must shortly be consigned to the grave ; miracles, which tend merely to modify matter, such as : causing green trees to wither, withered trees to spring, and water to gush out of the flinty rock : miracles of this nature, are far less important than those, which cause the thorns of vice to wither, the seeds of grace to spring, and streams of sacred consolation to flow through those very hearts, which were formerly barren as a desert, and hard as the rock, that Moses smote.

5. " If you wish for miracles," says a christian writer ; " if you are anxious to experience them " in yourselves ; if, in the secret of your heart, " you would become witnesses of his almighty " power, by whom that heart was formed, then " ask of him this sublime virtue [this charity] " from which all your inclinations and habits de- " tain you at so vast a distance, that you are in " no situation to form any just idea of it, nor " even to conceive the possibility of its exist- " ence (d)."

6. This

(d) Professor Croufaz' serm, upon 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

6. This *sublime virtue*, this *divine charity*, and these *saered consolations*, which were as a *well of water springing up into everlasting life*, in the hearts of Christ's first disciples, may still be made to break forth in ours. The source of these inestimable graces can never be exhausted (e); and the faithful, who experience in themselves this consoling miracle, stand in need of no other prodigy to establish them in the faith of the Gospel.

7. The most important miracles were those, which were wrought by the Apostles, when, as fellow-workers together with God, they opened the eyes of sinners, turning them *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God* (f). True miracles of mercy these, and memorable conversions, which the word of God, in the mouths of his ministers, is continually operating in every age.

8. The *charity*, which is discovered by a faithful pastor, who humbly co-operates with God in the conversion of his inveterate enemies, should be regarded by the world, as the truest test of his *Apostleship*. *Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; Whether there be tongues, they shall cease; but CHARITY never faileth. And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and perform the most unheard-of prodigies, if I have not CHARITY, I am nothing* (g).

The preceding replies are abundantly sufficient
to

(e) Heb. xiii. 8. (f) Acts xxvi. 18. (g) 1 Cor. xiii.

to demonstrate the weakness of their *third objection*, who are the professed enemies of apostolic zeal.

CHAP. VI.

A FOURTH OBJECTION REFUTED.

THE objection here proposed has been abundantly more prejudicial to the cause of piety, than any of the preceding. You suppose, say formal professors, that every pastor is called to labor for the salvation of souls, in the present day, with all that zeal, which animated St. Paul in primitive times. But their circumstances differ in a very material way. The Apostles were commissioned to preach the Gospel, either to obstinate Jews, or idolatrous Heathens: whereas our pastors are called to exertise their ministry among such, as have received the truth from their earliest infancy. Is it not then contrary to common sense, that the same laborious efforts should be thought necessary for the instruction of CHRISTIANS which St. Paul was formerly constrained to make use of for the conversion of idolaters?

As this specious objection has been more frequently repeated, than properly refuted, it becomes necessary, in this place, to expose all its weakness,

weakness, and to demonstrate, that the difference between sinners, who are baptized, and those, with whom St. Paul had to do, is by no means in favor of indolent pastors.

1. There are found swarms of infidels and idolaters in every christian country upon earth. We need not look beyond protestant churches to discover multitudes of impious christians, who not only despise the Gospel in secret, but who even dare to make it the subject of publick ridicule: men, who *have set up their idols in their hearts* (a), and who perfectly answer the Apostles' description of degenerate professors (b).

2. St. Paul himself sufficiently answers this very objection, as follows: *In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature: and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them* (c). If there are any, who make a profession of receiving the christian faith, and who follow not this evangelical rule, the Apostle thus addresses them, with an holy warmth: *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownelves; know ye not your ownelves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates* (d)? *Be not deceived: neither covetous persons, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God* (e).

3. Observe

(a) Ezek. xiv. 2. (b) 2 Tim. iii. 2—5. (c) Gal. vi. 15, 16,

(d) 2 Cor. xiii. 5. (e) 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

3. Observe how the same objection is combated again in another of St. Paul's epistles. *Behold, thou art called a CHRISTIAN, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, being instructed out of the twofold law of Moses and of Christ. Thou, that makest thy boast of this law; if thou, through breaking the law, dishonorest God, the name of God is then blasphemed among the gentiles through you. Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest the heathen, as sinners more hopeless than thyself: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. And thinkest thou, O man, that thy privileges unimproved, will assist thee to escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness; not knowing, that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? Beware lest, after the hardness of thine impenitent heart, thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath (f).*

4. If every scriptural threatening is denounced against those, who are without that holiness, which the Gospel requires, it would ill become us to flatter either ourselves or others with being the true followers of Christ, merely on account of that external profession of christianity, which is generally apparent among us. Is it not undeniably evident, that such a profession, unless it be accompanied with strict holiness, will subject us to

(f) Rom. ii. 1—24.

to more and heavier stripes, than if we had never known the will of our heavenly Father, nor ever acknowledged Christ as our rightful Lord (g)? Did not our gracious Master himself once openly manifest a greater degree of abhorrence toward the *lukewarm christian*, than toward the *notorious sinner* (h)? And has he not plainly declared, that myriads of righteous heathens shall be permitted to sit down in the Kingdom of God, while multitudes of his professing people shall be cast into outer darkness (i)?

5. After infants have been baptized, and after young persons have been admitted to the holy communion, the true pastor, instead of taking it for granted, that they are become unfeigned christians by partaking of these ordinances, examines them with diligence from time to time, and, from an attentive observation of their conduct, forms a judgment of their faith. If, after the strictest scrutiny, he discovers some among them, who hold the form, without experiencing the power of godliness, he renews his work with increasing ardor. The most painful part of his duty is still before him, when he attempts to convert those *sinners*, who are *baptized*, and those *infidels*, who are *communicants*: since before he can lead them to that *faith which worketh by love*, as St. Paul was accustomed to lead unprejudiced heathens, he must first unmask them with a holy severity,

as

(g) Luke xii. 47, 48. (h) Rev. iii. 16, (i) Luke xiii. 28, 29.

as the blessed Jesus was accustomed to unmask the pharisees of his day.

6. If unregenerate christians are heathens by their worldly disposition ; if they are pharisees by their presumption, and confirmed in their pharisaism by the fallacious opinions they indulge of their prerogatives under the Gospel : — it follows, that every modern pastor is called to a performance of the twofold duty above described. And if this be the case, how unreasonable is it to imagine, that the ministers of our own time have a much less difficult task before them than those, who were formerly commissioned to publish the Gospel !

7. All pastors have an important task assigned them, and, till this is performed, they are required to labor without fainting. Observe in what this task consists : — *He that descended from Heaven, saith St. Paul, gave some Apostles ; and some pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : Till we all come, both pastors and flocks, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (k).*

When every christian has attained to this exalted state, the ministers of the Gospel may then assert their work to be complete, and need imitate no longer the diligence of St. Paul. But while we are surrounded with baptized swearers, sabbath-breakers, slanderers, gamesters, drunkards,

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(k) Eph. iv. 11—13.

drunkards, gluttons, debauchees, blasphemers, and hypocrites, who are using every effort to render christianity despicable before infidels, and execrable in the eyes of philosophers: at such a time, it cannot be reasonably imagined, that any individual laborer is permitted to stand idle in the spiritual vineyard. And yet, in this very time of universal degeneracy, there are not wanting many among us, who inconsiderately cry out; "St. Paul, without doubt, had reason to labor with unremitting assiduity for the conversion of idolatrous heathens; but *we* are converted already, and see no necessity for that burning zeal, and those strenuous efforts among our modern teachers, which were formerly commendable in that Apostle."

8. If it be objected, that christians are here represented in a more deplorable point of view, than candor or observation can warrant; we make our appeal to those proclamations, which have been made with a view to repress the single sin of profaning the name of God, by impious oaths and horrible imprecations. These must undoubtedly be considered as public testimonies of public guilt. In such proclamations every christian government, whether catholic or protestant, equally complain, that all the civil laws, by which they have endeavoured to enforce the Law of God, have proved insufficient to prevent the overflowings of a crime, as *insipid* as it is *disgraceful*. In vain have

have new penalties and punishments been decreed ; in vain are they constantly held forth from the pulpits of preachers and the thrones of kings : this despicable vice still reigns undisturbed among us, insulting over the broken laws of earth and Heaven.

Now if it has hitherto been found impossible to prevent the commission of a sin, which has neither pleasure nor profit to plead in its favor, what can we expect of all those thousand vices, which allure with promises of both ? Are not dissimulation and perjury, injustice and covetousness, lasciviousness and luxury apparent among the members of every church ? Do not rapine, revenge, and murder, defile every part of Christendom, in spite of prisons, banishment and death ? It is a truth too notorious to be controverted, that every crime, with which human nature has ever been polluted, is still continually practised in the most enlightened parts of the world.

We might here mention, if it were necessary, the contempt in which marriage is held, the instability of that holy estate, and the facility with which so sacred a bond is broken. We might go on to bewail the frequent commission of suicide in christian communities — But to speak of these with many other sins, which are increasing around us to an alarming degree, would be only to echo back those sad complaints, which are every day breathed from the lips of the

righteous. The above remarks may possibly appear uncharitable to some: but, if they are without foundation, how many *unmeaning expressions* do we find in our liturgy! what *hypocrisy* in our public confessions! what *false humility* in our prayers!

From all these observations, it is evident, that the most heathenish manners are common among christians so called, and that the most scandalous vices are prevalent, even in those countries, where reformed christianity has erected its standard. Let the impartial enquirer then declare, whether it be not peculiarly necessary to preach repentance among those, whose rebellion against God is accompanied with perfidiousness and hypocrisy?

C H A P. VII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

1. **W**ERE it even certain, that professing christians in general walk according to their holy vocation, would it be commendable in pastors to shew less concern for the salvation of Christ's apparent disciples, than was anciently discovered by St. Paul, for the conversion of persecuting heathens? Christians are our brethren.

The

The church, our common mother, has nourished us with the same spiritual milk, and calls us to a participation of the same heavenly inheritance. Christians are no more *strangers*; and even those, who are *bad* citizens, and *unfaithful* domesticks, are nevertheless in some sense citizens of the same city with ourselves, and *of the household of God* (a). Hence, as we compose but one household, so whenever we are disposed to neglect any part of this family, we may apply to ourselves the following words of the Apostle: *If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel* (b). Let ministers, then, be placed in the happiest imaginable circumstances, and it will still become them to cry out, with the pious benevolence of St. Paul; *As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, ESPECIALLY unto them, who are of the household of faith* (c).

2. We may here pursue the idea, which Christ himself has given us, by comparing his church to a vineyard. If it be necessary to graft those stocks, which are naturally wild; is it less necessary to cultivate those, which have been already grafted? We see the husbandman bestowing most culture upon those vines, which produce the most excellent fruit. Let ministers attend to this general rule: and since *they* only can be fruitful in the sacred vineyard, who receive the word

Q 3

of

(a) Eph. ii. 19. (b) 1 Tim. v. 8. (c) Gal. vi. 10.

of God in faith, let them study to train up believers to the highest state of maturity. Thus the heavenly husbandman is represented, as purging every fruitful branch, *that it may bring forth more fruit* (d).

3. The word of God must be offered to sinners as a *remedy* suited to the disease of their souls: but to the faithful it must be administered as *nourishing food*. Hence, as the order of grace resembles that of nature, it is necessary, in a spiritual sense, to minister nutriment to the healthy in much greater quantities, than medicine to those, who are diseased. Thus believers, who constantly hunger and thirst after greater degrees of grace, should more frequently receive the *living word*, that they may abound yet more and more in knowledge, till they are *filled with the fruits of righteousness* (e).

4. We find the following expressions in the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans: *I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another. Nevertheless I have written the more boldly unto you, as putting you in mind. And I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established* (f). Now, if St. Paul could express so earnest a desire to instruct those christians, who were perfect strangers to him, and who were already so divinely enlightened;
far

(d) John xv. 2. (e) Phil. i. 9—11. (f) Rom. xv. 14, 15. i. 11.

far from being imitators of this great Apostle, do we not forfeit all pretensions to charity, while we suffer those ignorant christians to perish *for lack of knowledge* (g), who are not only of our neighbourhood, but probably of our very parish?

5. Though St. Paul was assisted with miraculous endowments, yet how anxiously did he endeavour to fill up the twofold duties of a believer in Christ, and a minister of his Gospel. And shall *we* refuse to labor with equal earnestness, whose gifts are so mean, and whose graces are so inconsiderable? Appointed, like the primitive preachers of christianity, to be *fishers of men*, is it not perfectly reasonable, that we should manifest as great activity with our feeble lines, as St. Paul was accustomed to discover in the use of his capacious net? If that Apostle, filled with holy zeal, was enabled to convert more sinners at a single discourse, than many pastors are known to convert in a thousand sermons, should we not, by our uncommon assiduity, supply, as much as possible, the want of that incomprehensible energy, which accompanied his ministerial labors?

6. Ministers are compared to labourers, who go forth to cultivate the lands of their master. Now St. Paul, as the foremost of these labourers, wrought night and day with an extraordinary instrument, which marked out furrows of an uncommon depth, and ploughed up entire provin-

Q 4

ces.

(g) Hosea iv. 6.

ces on a sudden. He made the fullest proof of his ministry, and, by the most astonishing efforts, spread the seed of the Gospel *from Jerusalem, round about unto Illyricum* (h). How vast a difference between the former and latter pastors of the christian church! Many of us are content to stand altogether idle, till *the night cometh, in which no man can work* (i): while others, who are disposed to some little occupation, employ themselves as *workmen*, who have *need* to be utterly *ashamed* of their insignificant labors (k). At best we hold but a tardy instrument; an instrument, which with immense toil will but barely graze the earth, we are called to cultivate. And shall we, thus unhappily circumstanced, permit our ploughshares to gather rust during six successive days, and then leisurely employ them but an hour upon the seventh? Surely such a mode of conduct is as contrary to common sense, as to the example St. Paul has left us.

7. So astonishing is the inconstancy, the weakness, and the depravity of the human heart, that in spite of all the persevering industry of this Apostle in the vineyard of his Lord, it still brought forth briars and thorns, to the anguish of his soul. *Behold*, saith he to the Corinthians, *the third time I am ready to come unto you, for your edifying. For I fear, lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found*
unto

(h) Rom. xv. 19. (i) John ix. 4. (k) 2 Tim. ii. 15.

unto you such, as ye would not : lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults : and lest when I come, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many, which have sinned already, and have not repented (1).

We shall close this chapter by proposing the following queries, which may be reasonably grounded upon the preceding passage. If the natural and supernatural talents of St. Paul; if his zeal, his diligence, and his apostolic authority were insufficient to engage his flock to conduct themselves, as followers of Christ; if their want of piety drew from him tears of lamentation, and obliged him to renew his painful efforts with redoubled solicitude; can those pastors be said to possess the spirit of the Gospel, who behold with indifference the disorders of that falling church, which Christ has purchased with his own blood? And if the extraordinary labors of St. Paul were not sufficient fully to answer the design of the sacred ministry, is it not presumption indeed to imagine, that our trivial services are sufficiently complete?

(1) Rom. xii. 14—27.

C H A P. VIII.

A FURTHER REPLY TO THE SAME
OBJECTION.

WHEN we attack a prejudice, that is obstinately defended, it is frequently as needful to multiply arguments, as it is necessary in a siege to multiply assaults. Pursuing this method, we shall endeavour upon new grounds to establish the doctrine contended for in the two last chapters.

I. After exhorting Timothy to labor without ceasing, St. Paul assigns the following reason for such injunction: *Know, saith he, that in the last times of the christian church, men, who make a profession of faith, shall be lovers of their own selves, despisers of those, that are good — lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof* (a). Now, if Timothy was exhorted to use all diligence, in opposing those evils, which were then only making their approach; is it reasonable, that *we* should be remiss, who are unhappy enough to see those *last times*, in which the decay of piety, predicted

(a) 2 Tim. iii. 1—5.

predicted by the Apostle, is become universal? On the contrary, is not this the moment, in which we should strenuously resist the overflowings of ungodliness, and fortify those who are not yet swept away by the impetuous torrent?

2. When the great Apostle benevolently carried the word of God to sinners of every different nation, he thereby armed against himself the authority of magistrates and priests, as well Jewish as pagan. His universal philanthropy, exposed him to the most cruel persecutions. Thousands, and ten thousands were set in array against him, and the inhabitants of every kingdom seemed determined to resist or destroy him, in his spiritual progress. He saw these surrounding dangers; but he saw them without discovering any symptom of fear: and rather than discontinue his painful labors, he cheerfully proceeded to encounter every threatening evil. We, on the contrary, are appointed to build up the children of the kingdom in *their most holy faith*. And shall we labor *less*, because we can labor with *less danger*? Shall we neglect the duties of our sacred function, because our superiors in church and state *permit* us to convert sinners, *command* us to preach the Gospel, *erect* us *temples* for the public celebration of divine worship, and *allow* us *salaries*, that our ministry may never be interrupted by secular cares? The ministerial services, which St. Paul performed with such unabating

abating zeal, when his reward was imprisonment and stripes, must we be engaged to discharge by emoluments and honors? And, after all, shall we limit our constrained obedience precisely to that point, which will merely secure us from public deposition and disgrace?

3. What was the error of Demas; a man, as notorious by his fall among the *Evangelists*, as Judas among the *Apostles*? Demas loved this present world (b), and, ceasing to imitate the diligence of St. Paul, ungratefully left him to labor almost without a second. And will unfaithful Evangelists presume, that they may imitate, without fear, the apostacy of Demas, and renounce, with impunity, the example of St. Paul? If such is their unhappy persuasion, we submit the following queries to their serious consideration. Are the souls of men less valuable; is sin of any kind less detestable, or the Law of God less severe, in the present day, than in the earlier ages of the christian church? Have pastors a right to be remiss, while the night of incredulity is blackening around them? Are the attacks of antichristian philosophers less frequent and audacious at present, than in former times? Or, finally, is the appearance of our omnipotent Judge no longer expected in the world?

4. If the Apostles and primitive pastors have removed many threatening impediments out of our

(b) 2 Tim. iv. 10.

our way ; if they have procured for us our present advantages, by the most amazing exertions, and at the prodigious price of their blood ; surely it can never be imagined, that they acted with so much resolution and suffered with so much constancy, that we might become the *indolent readers* of their unparalleled history. Was it not rather, that, animated with a becoming sense of their great example, we might make the highest improvement of our inestimable privileges ?

5. The mountains are now laid low, the valleys are filled up, the crooked ways are made straight, and we have only to carry that salvation to sinners, for which such wonderful preparations have been made. And are we negligent in running on the errands of *everlasting LOVE* ? And are we backward in bearing the happiest tidings to the most hapless of creatures ? No excuse then can possibly be made for this coldness, except that, which the author of *Emilius* has put into the mouth of a fictitious character : *Of what importance is it to me, says the vicar Savoyard, what becomes of the wicked ! I am but little concerned in their future destiny.* An excuse for the want of zeal, which can never be pleaded, without reflecting the utmost disgrace upon humanity.

6. Ye pastors of a flock ever prone to wander ! choose whom you will follow, philosophers or Apostles ; the indefatigable zeal of St. Paul, or the cruel indifference of the sceptical vicar ? But,
if

if you take the latter for your model, we solemnly entreat you to lay aside the *profession*, while you so shamefully renounce the *duties* of the holy ministry. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live* (c). With you, however, it is a matter of very inconsiderable importance, whether the wicked be finally saved, or destroyed. And yet, careless as you are of its weal or woe, you presume to appear as ministers of the church, and as pastors over that *little flock*, for which the good shepherd was content to lay down his life. To rank with the watchful attendants of the fold is an honor, of which you are altogether unworthy; but you may with propriety be counted in the number of those ungrateful hirelings, who *care not for the sheep* (d).

8. It is true, you are not without companions, as well ancient as modern. You have Hophni and Phinehas, Gehazi and Balaam, to keep you in countenance; you have the prophets of Jezebel to plead in your favour, and every worldly ecclesiastic of the present day to approve your choice: but apostolical men will resolutely withstand you, like Elisha and his Master, in the cause of deserted truth.

Ye slothful domesticks of the most diligent Master! Ye cruel attendants of the tenderest shepherd!

(c) Ezek. xxxiii. 11. (d) John x, 13.

shepherd! say, have ye never heard that Master crying out, with the voice of affection, *Feed my sheep* (e)? Have ye not seen him conducting his flock to an evangelical pasture, in the temple, in synagogues, in villages, in houses, in deserts, on the sea-shore, and on the tops of mountains? He anxiously sought out the miserable. Truth was the guide of his way, charity accompanied his steps, and his path was marked with blessings. His secret efforts were more painful than his public labors: he publicly instructed through the day, but he privately agonized in prayer through the night.

His first disciples were anxious to tread in the steps of their adorable Master. They exercised their ministry within sight of torments and death. And will you dare to neglect it, now the cry of persecution is hushed? Will you equally despise, both the promises and threatenings of the Gospel? Will you hasten the times of antichrist, by an antichristian conduct? And when the Son of man shall come, shall he find you trampling under foot the Gospel of his grace? Or, shall he surprize you distributing cards round the tables of your friends, rather than earnestly inviting those friends to the table of your Lord?

O that we could prevail upon you to stand in your proper post, and act in conformity to your professional character! While you dream of security,

(e) John xxi, 17.

security, you are surrounded with the most alarming dangers. *Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth; having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace: above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplications for all saints; and for the ministers of the Gospel in particular, that they may open their mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, and diffuse abroad the unsearchable riches of Christ (f).*

Thus, quitting yourselves like men, in this sacred warfare, after steadily resisting, you shall finally overcome all the strength of the enemy, *by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left (g): Till having weathered out the evil day, continuing faithful unto death, ye shall be rewarded with a crown of everlasting life (h).*

(f) Eph. vi. 14—19. iii. 8. (g) 2 Cor. vi. 7. (h) Rev. ii. 10.

CHAP. IX.

A FURTHER REFUTATION OF THE
SAME OBJECTION.

I. **W**HEN we see a number of persons in perilous circumstances, charity constrains us to make our first efforts in favor of those, who appear to be in the most imminent danger. Such are unholy christians. Sinful heathens are doubtless in danger; obstinate jews in still greater peril; but impenitent christians are in a situation abundantly more lamentable than either; since they offend against clearer light and knowledge, equally inattentive to the most gracious promises, on one hand, and the most terrible menaces, on the other. To *sin* with the new Testament in our hand, and with the sound of the Gospel in our ears — to *sin* with the seal of baptism in our forehead, and the name of Christ in our lips — to *sin* and receive the holy communion; to ratify and break the most solemn engagements; what is this, but earnestly laboring out our own damnation, and plunging ourselves into those abysses of wretchedness, which pagans and jews are unable to fathom? How
eagerly

eagerly then should every believer attempt to rescue his falling brethren? and especially, how anxious should they be to arrest those leaders of the blind, who are drawing their followers to the brink of perdition?

As this is one of those arguments, upon which the truth here pleaded for, must principally rest, we shall consider it in the several points of view, under which it is presented to us in the Gospel.

2. The commission of St. Paul was particularly directed to the gentiles: yet, before he visited their benighted nations, he judged it his duty to make a full and free offer of the everlasting Gospel to the people of the jews. For the conduct of the Apostle in this respect, the following reasons are to be assigned. First, *The promises pertained to the jews in a peculiar manner* (i). Secondly, *The children of Abraham, according to the flesh, had a more threatening prospect before them, in case of final impenitence, than any other people upon earth: Tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man, that doth evil, of the jew FIRST and also of the gentile* (k).

3. The same reasons, though chiefly the latter, are still to be urged, why the ministers of Christ should principally labor among christians. For if sinners of the *circumcision* shall be more severely punished than the ignorant heathen, so the Apostle declares, that sinners, who are baptized

(i) Rom. ix. 4. (k) Rom. ii. 9.

tized into the name of Christ, shall be treated with still greater rigor than impenitent jews. *He that despised Moses' law, saith he, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, then, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God—and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace (l)?* If this consideration was accompanied with its due effect, it would fire us with the most unconquerable zeal for the salvation of negligent christians.

4. In one of the last discourses our Lord addressed to the cities of Galilee, we find him reading over them this dreadful sentence of condemnation. *Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, which by thy religious privileges, art exalted unto Heaven, shalt, for the non-improvement of them, be brought down to Hell. Yea, it shall be more tolerable, in the day of judgment for the land of Sodom, which has been already consumed with fire from above, than for thee (m).*

5. To draw the just consequences from this affecting menace, we must recollect, that, when it

(l) Heb. x. 28, 29. (m) Matt. xi. 21—24.

it was pronounced, the inhabitants of the above-mentioned cities had been favored, but for a very short interval, with the ministry of Christ and his messengers: And if the death and resurrection of Jesus were afterwards published among them, it is more than probable, that these important facts were published only in a desultory and transient way. Nevertheless the sinners of Capernaum were thought worthy of greater punishment, than the sinners of Sodom. Hence we conclude, that, if the sinners of London, Paris, Rome, and Geneva, have hardened themselves against the truths of the Gospel for a much longer continuance, than the citizens of Capernaum were permitted to do, there is every reason to apprehend, that their sentence will not only be more dreadful than the sentence of Sodom, but abundantly less tolerable than that, which was pronounced upon the inhabitants of Galilee.

6. While we consider the various proportions in which future punishment shall be administered to the wicked of different classes, we may turn to those remarkable expressions of St. Peter and St. Paul: — *If after having escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For, it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered*

delivered unto them (n).

If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries (o). These declarations assist us to discover the true ground of that apostolic exhortation, with which we shall close this chapter: Of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire (p).

From this last view of the subject we may perceive, into how dangerous an error those persons are fallen, who presume to object against imitating the zeal of St. Paul.

C H A P. X.

A FIFTH OBJECTION ANSWERED.

THE solidity of the preceding remarks may be acknowledged by many pastors, who will still excuse themselves from copying the example of St. Paul.

It is unreasonable, they will say, to require that we should preach the word of God, in season and out of season, as St. Paul once did, and as Timothy was afterwards exhorted to do. We find it, in this day,

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(n) 2 Pet. ii, 20, 21. (o) Heb. x. 26, 27. (p) Jude 22, 23.

a matter of difficulty to prepare any public address, that may be either acceptable to the people, or honorable to ourselves.

To this objection we return the following replies.

1. He, who spake as never man spake, rejected the arts of our modern orators, delivering his discourses in a style of easy simplicity, and unaffected zeal.

2. We do not find, that St. Paul and the other Apostles imposed upon themselves the troublesome servitude of penning down their discourses. And we are well assured, that when the seventy and the twelve were commissioned to publish the Gospel, no directions of this nature were given in either case.

3. St. Paul gives the following pastoral instructions to Timothy: *Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift, that is in thee. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them. Take heed unto thyself and to thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee* (a). *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine* (b). Now, had it ever entered into the mind of the Apostle, that it would be proper for pastors to compose their sermons in the manner of rhetoricians, and to deliver them as public

(a) 1 Tim. iv. 13, 16.

(b) 2 Tim. iv. 2.

lic orators, he would most probably have given some intimation of this to his disciple. In such case, he would have held out to his pupil in divinity some instructions of the following nature. "O Timothy, my son! I have frequently commanded thee to labor in the work of the Lord, according to my example. But as thou art not an Apostle, properly so called, and hast not received the gift of languages, I advise thee to write over thy sermons as correctly as possible. And after this, do not fail to rehearse them before a mirror, till thou art able to repeat them with freedom and grace: so that when thou art called upon public duty, thou mayest effectually secure the approbation of thine auditors. Furthermore, when thou art about to visit any distant churches, lay up in thy portmanteau the choicest of thy sermons. And wherever thou art, take care to have, at least, one discourse about thee, that thou mayest be prepared against any sudden emergency, and never appear unfurnished in the eyes of the people."

The idea of such a passage in the epistles of St. Paul, whether public or private, is too absurd to be endured.

4. If advocates, after hastily considering a question of difficulty, are ready to plead the cause of their client before a court of judicature; can it be possible, that, after several years of meditation and study, a minister should still be unprepared to plead

plead the cause of piety, before a plain assembly of his unlearned parishioners?

5. When we are deeply interested in a subject of the last importance, do we think it necessary to draw up our arguments in an orderly manner upon paper, before we attempt to deliver our sentiments upon the matter in hand? Are not the love and penetration of a parent, sufficient to dictate such advice as is suited to the different tempers and conditions of his children? After perceiving the house of our neighbour on fire, we do not withdraw to our closet to prepare a variety of affecting arguments, by way of engaging him to save both himself and his family from the flames. In such case, a lively conviction of our neighbour's danger, and an ardent desire to rescue him from it, afford us greater powers of natural eloquence, than any rules of art can furnish us with.

6. Horace observes, that neither matter nor method will be wanting upon a well-digested subject:

*cui lecta potenter erit res,
Nec facundia deferet hunc, nec lucidus ordo.*

With how much facility then may suitable expressions be expected to follow those animating sentiments, which are inspired by an ardent love to God and man; especially when subjects of such universal concern are agitated, as death and redemption, judgment and eternity? Upon such occasions, out of the abundance of the heart the
mouth

mouth will speak, *nor will the preacher be able to repeat a tenth part of the truths, which God has communicated to him, while meditating upon his text.* (b). If malice can furnish those persons with an inexhaustible fund of conversation, who delight in malice, how much more may we suppose the charity of a pastor to furnish him with an inexhaustible fund of exhortation, instruction, and comfort.

7. It has been a plea with many ministers of the Gospel, that they neglect to proclaim that Gospel during six days in the week, lest they should be unprepared to address their parishioners, *with propriety*, upon the seventh. With teachers, who are thus scrupulously tenacious of their own reputation, we may justly be allowed to reason in the following manner. *To what purpose* are all those oratorical appendages, with which you are so studious to adorn your discourses : and *who hath required* all this useless labor at your hand (c) ? If a servant, after being charged by his master with a message of the utmost importance, should betake himself to his chamber, and defer the execution of it day after day ; would not such a delay be esteemed an unpardonable neglect ? Or, if he should attempt to apologise for the omission, by alledging that he had been busily engaged in learning to repeat, with *precision*, the message he had received, and to move upon his errand with *dignity* and *grace*—would not such an excuse be regarded, as an instance of the highest pre-

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sumption

(b) Act of Synod, chap. xl. (c) Isaiah L. 11, 12.

sumption and folly? And can we imagine, that our heavenly Master will overlook that neglect in his public messengers, which would appear, in the conduct of a private domestic, so justly condemnable?

8. What advantage has accrued to the church, by renouncing the apostolic method of publishing the Gospel? We have indolence and artifice, in the place of sincerity and vigilance. Those public discourses, which were anciently the effects of conviction and zeal, are now become the weekly exercises of learning and art. *We believe and therefore speak* (d), is an expression, that has grown entirely obsolete among modern pastors. But nothing is more common among us, than to say—As we have sermons prepared upon a variety of subjects, we are ready to deliver them, as opportunity offers.

9. Many inconveniences arise from that method of preaching, which is generally adopted in the present day. While the physician of souls is laboring to compose a learned dissertation upon some plain passage of scripture, he has but little leisure to visit those languishing patients, who need his immediate assistance. He thinks it sufficient to attend them upon every sabbath day, in the place appointed for public duty: but he recollects not, that those, to whom his counsel is peculiarly necessary, are the very persons, who refuse to meet him

(d) 2 Cor. iv. 13.

him there. His unprofitable employments at home, leave him no opportunity to go in pursuit of his wandering sheep. He meets them, it is true, at stated periods, in the common fold: but it is equally true, that during every successive interval, he discovers the coldest indifference with respect to their spiritual welfare. From this unbecoming conduct of many a minister, one would naturally imagine, that the flock were rather called to seek out their indolent pastor, than that he was purposely hired to pursue every straying sheep.

10. The most powerful nerve of the sacred ministry is ecclesiastical discipline. But this nerve is absolutely cut asunder by the method, of which we now speak. When a pastor withdraws fatigued from his study, imagining that he has honorably acquitted himself, with regard to his people, he is too apt to neglect that vigilant inspection into families, upon which the discipline of the church depends. Such a spiritual instructor may justly be compared to a vain-glorious pedagogue, who, after drawing up a copy, and adorning it, for several days together, with all the embellishments of his art, should yet imagine, that he had admirably performed his part, in preparing it, at length, for his scholars, without any visible defects. And what could reasonably be expected from the pupils of such a teacher, but, that, fearing neither scholastic discipline, nor particular inspection, they should neglect to transcribe what their master

with so much unprofitable toil had produced?

11. Since the orator's art has taken place of the energy of faith, what happy effect has it produced upon the minds of men? Have we discovered more frequent conversions among us? Are formal professors more generally seized with a religious fear? Are libertines more universally constrained to cry out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do (e)?* Do the wicked depart from the church, to bewail their transgressions in private; and believers to visit the mourners in their affliction? Is it not rather to be lamented, that we are at this day equally distant from christian charity, and primitive simplicity?

12. Reading over a variety of approved sermons is generally supposed to be preaching the Gospel. If this were really so, we need but look out some school boy of a tolerable capacity, and after instructing him to read over, with proper emphasis and gesture, the sermons of Tillotson, Sherlock, or Saurin, we shall have made him an excellent minister of the word of God. But, if preaching the Gospel is to publish among sinners that repentance and salvation, which we have experienced in ourselves; if it is to imitate a penitent slave, who, freed from misery and iron, returns to the companions of his former slavery, declaring the generosity of their Prince, and persuading them to sue for mercy;—if this is to publish the Gospel of peace, then it is evident, that experience and sympathy

(e) Acts xi. 37.

pathy are more necessary to the due performance of this work, than all the accuracy and elocution, that can possibly be acquired.

13. When this sacred experience, and this generous sympathy began to lose their prevalence in the church, their place was gradually supplied by the trifling substitutes of study and affectation. Carnal prudence has now for many ages solicitously endeavoured to adapt itself to the taste of the wise and the learned. But, while *the offence of the cross* is avoided (f), neither the wise, nor the ignorant are effectually converted. The Gospel is abundantly better suited to the *poor in spirit*, than to those, who value themselves as men of sagacity and science. *I thank thee, O Father!* said the lowly Jesus, *that thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes* (g). These *babes*, however, in the language of Christ, are the very persons, who have been usually neglected by us, for the mere gratification of reputed sages. Alas! how many thousand proofs do we require to convince us, that the wisdom of this world will continue to trample under foot the pearl of the Gospel, though in order to secure its reception, it should be presented among the artificial pearls of a vain philosophy?

14. In consequence of the same error, the ornaments of theatrical eloquence have been sought

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after:

(f) Gal. v. 22.

(g) Matt. xi. 25.

after with a shameful solicitude. And what has been the fruit of so much useless toil? *Preachers*, after all, have played their part with much less applause than *comedians*; and their curious auditors are still running from the pulpit to the stage, for the pleasure of hearing fables repeated with a degree of sensibility, which the messengers of truth can neither *feel*, nor *feign*.

Notwithstanding the above remarks have been expressed in the most pointed manner, we mean not to insinuate, that the errors already exposed are the only mistakes to be guarded against. Extremes of every kind are to be avoided with equal care. We condemn the carnal prudence of christian orators; but we as sincerely reprobate the conduct of those enthusiasts, who, under pretence, that Christ has promised to continue with his disciples to the end of the world, exhibit the reveries of a heated imagination for the truths of the Gospel. Too many of these deluded fanatics are found, who, taking their slothfulness and presumption, for the effects of a lively faith and an apostolic confidence, repeatedly affront the Almighty, and justly offend those candid hearers, who are least disposed to take offence. *Offences* will undoubtedly *come*: but it behoves us to make a just distinction between the real *offence of the cross*, and that, which is given by an unlicensed presumption on our own part.

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If we are honored with the pastoral office, let us consider the holy scriptures as an inexhaustible mine of sacred treasures. In the Law of the Lord let us meditate day and night. Before we attempt to deliver evangelical truths in public, let it be our first care, to penetrate our hearts, in private, with an adequate sense of those truths. Let us arrange them in the most suitable order: let us adduce and compare the several passages of sacred writ, which appear to support or explain the particular doctrines we mean to insist upon: but, above all, joining faith and prayer to calm meditation, after becoming masters of our subject, let us humbly ask of God, that *καρπνοια*, that lively and forcible elocution, which flows from the unction of grace.

And here, instead of resting contented with barely *requesting*, we should labor to *acquire* what we seek, by frequently stirring up the gift, that is in us. Let us embrace every opportunity of exhorting both believers and catechumens. Let us carry, with unwearied constancy, instruction to the ignorant, and consolation to the afflicted. Let us be faithful in reproofing sinners of every class, and diligent in training up the children of our parish.

It is necessary indeed to be scrupulously cautious, lest we abuse the liberty of preaching from meditation, by becoming followers of those, who are more worthy of *censure*, than *imitation*. There are

are pastors of this kind, who, having acquired a good degree of spiritual knowledge, and a wonderful facility of expression, unhappily begin to pique themselves upon appearing before a numerous assembly without any previous study. Conscious of their own ability, these self-sufficient preachers make little or no preparation for one of the most solemn duties, that can possibly be discharged. They hasten to a crowded auditory without any apparent concern; and coming down from the pulpit with an air of the same easy confidence, with which they ascended it, contentedly return to that habitual listlessness, which had been interrupted by the external performance of a necessary work. Alas! if these presuming pastors could be prevailed upon to write over their sermons, to how much better purpose might they thus employ their hours, than by heedlessly trifling them away, in frivolous conversation and shameful inactivity!

It is not to imitate examples of this nature, that we solicit the ministers of Christ to recover those hours, which are usually employed in composing their weekly discourses. How many are the important occupations, of which the faithful pastor has his daily choice! The wicked are to be reclaimed, and the righteous established. Hope must be administered to the fearful, and courage to the tempted. The weak are to be strengthened, and the strong to be exercised. The sick must be supported

supported, and the dying prepared for dissolution. By frequent pastoral visits to hamlets, schools, and private houses, the indefatigable minister should continually be moving through the several parts of his parish; discovering the condition of those entrusted to his care, and regularly supplying the necessities of his flock; diffusing all around instruction and reproof, exhortation and comfort. To sum up his duties in a single sentence, he should cause the light, that is in him, to shine out in every possible direction, before the ignorant and the learned, the rich and the poor; making the salvation of mankind his principal pursuit, and the glory of God his ultimate aim.

Thus, after having faithfully performed the work of an evangelist, when he is about to be removed from his charge by death, or by any other providential appointment, he may take an affectionate leave of his people, and say; *Remember, my children, that, while I have sojourned among you, I have not ceased to warn every one of you **
night

* It is highly reasonable, that pastors should give evening instructions to those, who have been engaged, through the course of the day, in their different callings. This season, whether it be in the more dreary, or the more pleasing part of the year, is peculiarly suited to works of devotion. Such a custom might, at least, prevent many young persons from mixing with that kind of company, and frequenting those places, which would tend to alienate their minds from religion and virtue.

night and day; and if my word has not always been accompanied *with tears* (i), yet it has constantly flowed from the truest sincerity and affection.

CHAP. XI.

A REPLY TO THE FIFTH AND LAST OBJECTION, WHICH MAY BE URGED AGAINST THE PORTRAIT OF ST. PAUL.

THOSE persons who have already so earnestly resisted the truths for which we contend, will not fail to exclaim in the last place, by way of an unanswerable argument, *What you require of pastors is unreasonable, in the highest degree. If they are indeed called to labor for the salvation of souls, with the zeal and assiduity of St. Paul, the holy ministry must be regarded as the most painful of all professions, and, of consequence, our pulpits will be shortly unoccupied.*

Monf. Ostervald, who foresaw this objection, has completely answered it in his *Third source of the corruption, which reigns among christians*: “It will not fail to be objected,” says this venerable author, “that if none were to be admitted to holy orders, except those, who are possessed
“ of

(i) Acts xx. 31.

“ of every necessary qualification, there could not
“ possibly be procured a sufficient number of
“ pastors for the supply of our churches. To
“ which I answer ; that it would be abundantly
“ better to expose ourselves to this inconveni-
“ ence, than to violate the express laws of the
“ written word. A small number of chosen
“ pastors is preferable to a multitude of unquali-
“ fied teachers.” [One Elijah was more power-
ful than all the prophets of Baal.] “ At all
“ hazards, we must adhere to the command of
“ GOD, and leave the event to providence. But,
“ in reality, this dearth of pastors is not so gene-
“ rally to be apprehended. To reject those can-
“ didates for holy orders, whose labors in the
“ church would be altogether fruitless, is un-
“ doubtedly a work of piety ; and such alone
“ would be repulsed by the apprehension of a
“ severe scrutiny and an exact discipline. Others,
“ on the contrary, who are in a condition to ful-
“ fil the duties of the sacred office, would take
“ encouragement from this exactness and seve-
“ rity ; and the ministry would every day be
“ rendered more respectable in the world.”
Behold an answer truly worthy an apostolical
man !

If it still be objected, by the generality of pastors,
that what we require is as *unreasonable*, as it is
unusual : Permit me to ask you, my lukewarm
brethren, whether it be not necessary, that you
should

should use the same diligence in your sacred profession, with which your neighbours are accustomed to labor, in their worldly vocations and pursuits?

The *fisherman* prepares a variety of lines, hooks, and baits; he knows the places, the seasons, and even the hours, that are most favorable to his employment; nor will he refuse to throw his line several hundred times in a day. If he is disappointed in one place, he cheerfully betakes himself to another; and if his ill success is of any long continuance, he will associate with those, who are greater masters of his art. Tell me then, ye pastors, who make the business of a fisherman the amusement of many an idle hour, do ye really imagine, that less ardor and perseverance are necessary to prepare souls for Heaven, than to catch trout for your table?

The *hunter* rejoices in expectation of the promised chase. He denies himself some hours of usual repose, that he may hasten abroad in pursuit of his game. He seeks it with unwearied attention, and follows it from field to field with increasing ardor. He labors up the mountain: he rushes down the precipice: he penetrates the thickest woods, and overleaps the most threatening obstacles. He practises the wildest gestures, and makes use of the most extravagant language: endeavouring by every possible means, to animate both dogs and men in the furious pursuit

pursuit. He counts the fatigues of the chase among the number of its pleasures : and through the whole *insignificant* business of the day, he acts with as much resolution and fervor, as though he had undertaken one of the noblest enterprizes in the world.

The *fowler* with equal eagerness pursues his different game. From stubble to stubble, and from cover to cover he urges his way. He pushes through the stubborn brake, and takes his way along the pathless dingle : he traverses the gloomy mountain, or wanders devious o'er the barren heath : and, after carrying arms all day, if a few trifling birds reward his toil, he returns rejoicing home.

Come, ye fishers of men ! who, notwithstanding your consecration to God, are frequently seen to partake of these contemptible diversions ; come, and answer by your conduct, to the following questions. Is the flock committed to your charge, less estimable than the fowl, which you so laboriously pursue ? Or are you less interested in the salvation of your people, than in the destruction of those unhappy quadrupedes, which give you so much silly fatigue, and afford you so much brutal pleasure ?

Permit me, still further, to carry on my argument. Was the panting animal, which usually accompanies your steps in the last-mentioned exercise, incautiously to plunge into a dangerous

pit ; though faint with the labors of the day, and now on your return, would you carelessly leave him to perish ? Would you not, rather, use every effort to extricate him from apparent death ? Could you even sleep or eat, till you had afforded him every possible assistance ? And yet, you eat, you sleep, you visit ; nay, it may be, you dance, you hunt, you shoot ; and that without the least inquietude, while your flocks are rushing on from sin to sin, and falling from precipice to precipice. Ah ! if a thousand souls are but comparable to the vilest animal, and if these are heedlessly straying through the ways of perdition, may we not reasonably exhort you to use every effort in preserving them from the most alarming danger, and in securing them from the horrors of everlasting death ?

But, passing by those amusements, which so generally engage your attention, let me reason with you from one of the most laborious occupations of life. You are called to be *good soldiers of Jesus Christ* (a). And can you possibly imagine, that less resolution and patience are required in a spiritual warrior, than in an earthly soldier ? Behold the mercenary, who, for little more than food and clothing, is preparing to go on his twentieth campaign ! Whether he is called to freeze beneath the pole, or to melt under the line, he undertakes the appointed expedition with an air of intrepidity and zeal. Loaded with the weapons

(a) 2 Tim. ii. 3.

weapons of his warfare, he is harassed out with painful marches: and after enduring the excessive fatigues of the day, he makes his bed upon the rugged earth, or, perhaps, passes the comfortless night under arms. In the day of battle, he advances against the enemy amid a shower of bullets, and is anxious, in the most tremendous scenes, to give proofs of an unconquerable resolution. If, through the dangers of the day, he escapes unhurt, it is but to run the hazard of another encounter; perhaps, to force an entrenchment, or to press through a breach. Nothing, however, discourages him; but, covered with wounds, he goes on unrepining to meet the mortal blow. All this he suffers, and all this he performs in the service of his superiors, and with little hope of advancement on his own part.

Behold this dying veteran, ye timorous soldiers of an omnipotent prince! and blush at your want of spiritual intrepidity. Are you not engaged in the cause of humanity, and in the service of God? Are you not commissioned to rescue captive souls from all the powers of darkness? Do you not fight beneath *this* scrutinizing eye, who is KING of KINGS, and LORD of LORDS? Are you not contending within sight of eternal rewards, and with the hope of an unfading inheritance? And will you complain of difficulties, or tremble at danger? Will you not only

only avoid the heat of the engagement, but even dare to withdraw from the standard of your sovereign Lord? Let me lead you again into the field; let me drag you back to the charge: or, rather, let me shame your cowardice, by pointing you to those resolute commanders, who have formerly signalized themselves under the banners of your Prince. Emulate their example and you shall share their rewards.

But if, hitherto, you have neither contemplated the beauty, nor experienced the energy of those truths, by which St. Paul was animated to such acts of heroism; it is in vain, that we exhort you to *shine* among the foremost ranks of christians, as *inextinguishable lights*, holding up, against every enemy, as *a two-edged sword* (b), *the word of everlasting life* (c). Instead of this, it will be necessary to place before you the excellence, and efficacy of this Apostle's doctrines, together with the infinite advantages, which they procure to those, who cordially embrace them. And this we shall endeavour to do in the second part of this work. Mean-while, we will conclude this first part, with a short exhortation from St. Chrysostom's fifty-ninth sermon upon St. Matthew. "Since the present life is a continual warfare; since we are at all times surrounded by an host of enemies, let us vigorously oppose them, as our royal chieftain is pleased " to

(b) Heb. iv. 12.

(c) Phil. ii. 15, 16.

“ to command. Let us fear neither labor, nor
“ wounds, nor death. Let us all conspire mu-
“ tually to assist and defend one another. And
“ let our magnanimity be such, as may add
“ firmness to the most resolute, and give courage
“ to the most cowardly.”

END OF THE FIRST PART.

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